The PRICE OF WISDOM

MARJORIE BARKLEY Mc CLURE

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By Marjorie Barkley McClure

HIGH FIRES
A BUSH THAT BURNED
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My dear Franklyn,

You will never forget that June morning when we were admitted to the limited circle of those who knew the unpalliated facts of Terry's story. We saw her descending the long flight of rustic steps to the boat landing, and, though she was young then and her beauty bore the stamp of spiritual fineness, harsh judgment was pronounced upon her.

I felt that day for the first time what, through the years, I have grown to believe is the height of human wisdom. This: that to understand all things is to forgive all things.

Because you too believe in her, and have sympathized with me in my searching out of the heart of Terry, I want to dedicate this book to you.

MBMcC

. . . for the price of wisdom is above rubies.

Job; 28: 18

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BOOK ONE

TERRY

To the growing mind
  Freedom to think is fate,
And all that age and after-knowledge augurate
  Lies in a little dream of youth enshrined . . .

—*Percy Mackaye.*

THE PRICE OF WISDOM

I

BY Terry's new wrist watch it had taken Mabel exactly thirty minutes after the last curtain call to get off her make-up and dress for the street.

Gus had scolded about it on the way out to Bessie's on the elevated, but later at the supper table his usual spirits had revived until, over the coffee and cheese, he was in a mood for toasting Terry.

There were four of them in the dingy little apartment that night: Mabel Spencer, star of the *Sheep's Clothing* Company, in the second week of its Chicago run; Gus Samuels, theatrical producer, son of Samuels, the comedian; Bessie Parnell, Mabel's sister, for whom, to please Mabel, a part was being written in *Sheep's Clothing*, and—Terry.

Terry was Bessie's only child, but in their little world there were those who insisted upon the whimsical distinction of considering her Mabel's niece rather than Bessie's daughter.

They put Terry in the armchair at the head of the table as the one to whom special honor was due. Bessie disappeared kitchenward on the business of coffee and hot buttered toast, and Gus sat keenly anticipatory while Terry on his left operated the chafing dish and Mabel on his right concocted a *salade Henri*.

It was a nippy night in October—the sixth, to be exact—and since the year was nineteen hundred and eight and

the feast a very especial occasion of farewell to Terry, the *pièce de résistance* was lobster *à la Newburg* made delectable with sherry.

Tonight the talk was all of Terry, her past, her future, and her probable tremendous success as a dancer. Mabel Spencer, leaning back in her chair, her eyes on the girl across from her, talked quietly of the fifteen years since Terry's father had died, of their struggle, their hopes, and finally of her satisfaction in the results she observed in her niece.

"Our hard work has all been worth while, Terry. I want you to know I am more than satisfied with you."

The girl flushed happily and answered her young aunt with a long look of affection.

Gus's keen little eyes traveled about the circle of faces. "Wonderful thing, the resemblance between you three," he exclaimed, as if he had just discovered it. "You're all cast in the same mold, same tricks of expression, same easy smile. But the difference in your coloring is as vast as the world. Here's Mabel over here . . ." he extended a hand toward her which she ignored, "is a regular pink and gold rose, amber lights, as the poets say. Amber hair, amber tones in her skin, amber-lit eyes. God bless 'em, they swell the box-office receipts and put the show over. And here's Bessie . . ."

"Bessie's not in the least colored. No lights at all," said Bessie herself, and Gus agreed.

"Right you are. Pale, interesting, wistful! The 'prayerful mother of *Naida*' across the table from me. It's a good little part, though, Bessie, and when we work in a few wrinkles and put a nice soft gray wig over your chestnut locks we'll have you looking old enough to be *Naida's* mother, won't we, *Naida?*"

Mabel nodded, smiling.

"And there's old Terry," Gus went on in the tone of one who has arrived at the point of his monologue, "who is a triumph in pigmentation. Turner himself couldn't

have imagined you, Terry. You're better than anything Turner ever did, hey, Bessie? You're pastels brought out with black. Pastel pink for skin, pastel raspberry mouth, pastel blue for eyes,—blue flecked with black, edged with black, fringed with black, and the whole business crowned with black. Great family, you girls; I like looking at you. So does the public."

The talk went on, mostly, Terry noted, between Gus and her mother.

Terry did not want to listen. She was consumed with impatience to have this ceremony of leave-taking ended that she might be alone.

Her memories of the past two days, her anticipation of the life that was to begin on the morrow, were much more real than the dull cocoon of this habitation which already the butterfly wings of her youth had broken.

To her mother the parting was a wrench of which she complained with tears, and though Terry said, "Poor mamma," and patted a clinging hand, she knew Bessie had awaited this moment when her daughter should become entirely self-supporting with an impatience that had made the last years a hurting memory, for Terry had been held by Mabel's will and reasonableness to her course of study, which was expensive; she had been goaded by Bessie's poverty to constant realization of her dependence, and now that she was to have freedom from both she had no lingering sentiment for the leave-taking.

Across the table from her she saw Mabel's tired eyes fixed on Gus, and she knew that Mabel was remembering Gus's part in the succession of disappointments and opportunities that had brought them to this hour of parting. Mabel would never forget it and perhaps never forgive Gus, but Terry was deeply thankful to him for having failed them at the moment of her need, and she thought back over their disagreement with sympathy so impartially divided between the two that the very lack of feeling gave the measure of her indifference.

All her life it had been understood that when she had reached a certain point in her training for the stage, Gus should take her as his special protégé and give her the sort of rôle for which she had been prepared according to his own theories. But when the time for his tutelage brought forth only the negligible offer of a part in a number two company of *Oklahoma,* Mabel's shock and disappointment had been expressed in a recoil so emphatic that she had forced Gus into the stronghold of his stubbornness.

Terry had been present at this interview and she remembered it as a time of self-revelation, for until she had heard the argument that changed the course of Mabel's plans for her, she had not known how little she desired the career toward which she had been working.

Even though she had been the bone of contention Terry had seen humor in their swift arguments as they discussed her with a frank disregard for her sensibilities.

"She's worth two hundred dollars a week for her dancing alone," Mabel had said coldly, when she saw that Gus meant to bargain. "You ought to make a play for her and advertise her as the most finished and beautiful Duncan pupil in this country."

Gus had taken an aggravating tone. As if Mabel didn't know the history of every hour of Terry's life, he reviewed it, emphasizing her youth, the unimportance of the juvenile rôles she had played, reminding Mabel that though the dancing had been part of their careful plan for her training it had been achieved at a sacrifice in dramatic experience, until Mabel said in her lovely, troubled voice, "Gus, we have agreed before now that neither experience nor age have value unless they have begotten understanding. Terry has understanding, and she is fit now to play big rôles. Eleanora Duse began at twelve to play leads, and while she was still so young that all the arts of make-up had to be exerted to make her look old enough for the part, she played *Juliet.* But

I won't argue with you, for as it happens we have a chance to give Terry a year of an entirely different experience. It isn't what I planned for her, but she wants to accept it more than she wants to go under your management."

"For heaven's sake, what?" It was startling, almost inconceivable to Gus that Terry had any dream other than one that began with grateful acceptance of anything he chose to offer her.

Mabel had risen and, with a gesture toward Terry which told Gus that from now on Terry would speak for herself, she turned and strolled down the room.

Terry had found it possible to sympathize with Gus in his discomfiture as he heard of the opportunity that had come to her through Madame Duncan. She radiated joy when she explained that it was not the salary as a teacher nor the desire to initiate clumsy girls into the art of achieving Greek urn effects that delighted her, but the prospect of a normal life in the rich and fashionable city of White Falls where she would have the sort of friendship that had always been her greatest hunger.

"A Mrs. Withington, who knows Madame Duncan, is chairman of a committee that will back me," she explained happily. "They want me any time I will come and it really works out right for all of us."

Plans for the new life in White Falls had been quickly made after that. Terry spent the day of October fifth with Mrs. Withington and her committee and returned on the night train with the news that she had but one day to pack. She must leave the morning of the seventh, for her classes were to open the following Saturday with an assembly for children.

II

FAILURE is the only sin, Terry. You're not listening to us, but you may as well give me your attention because I'm going to talk straight to you. You take it from me, pack it in your little suitcase and label it 'love and best wishes from Gus.' It's true; it's my ten commandments, my prayer book and my rosary. *Failure is the only sin.*" Gus's soft white hands were outspread in a gesture of vehemence and, as he paused for effect, he saw that Terry was listening with alert interest. He dropped his hands to the cloth and said, "Pass the cheese again, Bessie. Gruyère, delicious!"

Bessie passed the cheese and Mabel, returning suddenly to the conversation, said, "That isn't new to Terry. I've preached it to her all her life."

"And I have preached it to you all your life and my father preached it to me all my life. Age is proof of its soundness. It's true. It stands up under the tests of logic. Now give me another cracker. That's the girl."

"You can't expect to reduce, not ever, Gus, if you eat so much cheese! I don't know whether it stands up under the tests of logic or not. I have lived by it, but when I think of Terry. . . ."

"It's the only thing for Terry. She'll have some awful discouragements. It will give her the backbone to ride the sloughs. It is a vast philosophy, a force. If she believes it, she won't fail. I haven't failed. You haven't failed. It is a talisman."

"No, we haven't failed, but our sort of success proves nothing for your creed. I simply haven't dared not to live by it. I've been like the people who believed in ghosts. I was afraid not to believe. Terry ought to have something better. . . ." She paused and her brows rose in a charming inverted V that was the sign on her face of

anxious concern. "It just comes to me suddenly as I am reviewing all these years of Terry's training that we have never given her any philosophy but the gospel according to Samuels. I fancy she'll live by it, lacking anything better." The dark hazel eyes were on the girl again.

Terry nodded. "Don't forget that mother can talk an hour any day on the stupendous truth of the text, God Helps Those Who Help Themselves."

"Indeed I can." Bessie had gone into the kitchen to get another cup of coffee for Gus. Her reply traveled the length of the narrow hall and the three in the dining room smiled.

"Poor Bessie; she found that out fast enough after your father died."

"Talking about the tests of logic on my creed now, let's just make a few. For instance, what are the ten commandments? Who knows them?"

Gus looked about. Bessie returned with his coffee and handed him cream and sugar.

The room was silent.

"Well, nobody knows them, not the first six anyway. I'll bet you know the seventh, every modest little girl of you. Answer me this. If you break the seventh commandment which is the graver fault, breaking it or failing in your marriage? Would you break the seventh commandment if your marriage was a howling success? If you hadn't failed, if somebody hadn't failed? No, you wouldn't, certainly you wouldn't. Take the eighth. It's about stealing I think. Who'd steal if he had the brains, the skill, the success to get what he wanted with credit to himself instead of the stink of breaking the law? Nobody would. Stealing isn't fun. Stealing is confession of failure. I could go on and on for hours, and every time I could prove to you that failure is the father of sin and, narrowing it down, bring you to the final conclusion that failure is the only sin."

Terry heard him out before she said, "But, Mr. Sam-

uels, what about 'Not failure but low aim is crime?' What about Emerson and Jesus Christ and all the philosophers?"

"Good, I'm glad you asked me. It reminds me. This world of ours is utterly hypocritical, Terry. We are a self-deceived people living a falsehood with no sense whatever of our hypocrisy. We talk of Jesus Christ and Emerson as you did now, with pat little platitudes that tickle the ear, but those of us who are worth our salt go forward to success on my creed! Jesus and Emerson and the others are idealists of a period long past. We can't apply their teaching to this day and age. But my creed is for you and me, now, in nineteen hundred eight. Admire the old philosophers, the old artists, the old musicians. For their time they were great, but I tell you the big men of America today know that for the best good to the greatest number, individual success is a necessity. Suppose you have the highest motives for success in your calling and you are willing to be content with high motives merely, and fail, saying to yourself, 'I *aimed* high. I *meant* well.' What are you then? A Meant Well! That pest of pests, a Meant Well! As a Meant Well you will have recognized yourself as a failure, disappointed your mother, broken your aunt's heart, and shaken my faith. You see, failure involves others. . . ."

It was true that the gospel according to Samuels had been preached to Terry all her life, but as Gus concluded his exposition she felt a sudden realization of her responsibility to these three. She must succeed. She was stepping out alone to travel toward success or failure. If failure, there would be, as Gus had said, disappointment, heart-break, and shaken faith. Her breath came more rapidly and her imagination, stimulated by excitement, saw herself meeting the tests that would prove her to be either a Meant Well or a success, and she felt, with youth's abundant courage, that she would not fail, that with Gus's clear philosophy to guide her she could not fail.

III

Blackstone Hotel
October 6, 1908

My dear Miss Parnell—

I am regretting that I did not ask you to return to White Falls in time for the dinner and bal masqué I am giving at The Towers tomorrow night, October seventh.

You said you would return on that date but you did not name the hour. There is a train out of Chicago at eight-fifteen that arrives in White Falls at four-fifty, Northwestern. We dine at seven. I shall ask Mrs. Withington to take charge of you.

I rose early this morning to see you before you left the car but I was too late. You should have waited for me—I could have helped you to a taxi.

Please resist any impression you may have of me as a social light. This is the first time my house has been open to guests. It is an event, and one that I hope you will honor with your delightful presence.

Yours very truly,
Nicolai Karanoff.

THIS note, that had arrived by special messenger less than two hours after her return from White Falls, Terry read as she knelt before an open trunk while her mother and Mabel stood by watching.

They had just begun packing and the rooms were littered with Terry's possessions. Shoes, hats, dresses, and costumes were heaped in the chairs of the green plush parlor suite, while the dining room table, with its cloth askew under the crumby remains of a hasty breakfast, was crowded with a pile of boxes from Terry's dresser drawers.

Miss Spencer still wore her hat, for she had arrived from her hotel but a few minutes before the messenger, and had heard nothing of the Russian, of whom, it seemed, Terry had already made mention to her mother.

Terry was radiant when she finished the note and she

sprang up crying, "I shall wear my most impressive costume!"

Her happiness seemed flawless and she dashed about, gathering the gown, the slippers, the accessories together for minute inspection. "I've never had anything I like to wear so well as this. And to think my chance comes the very first evening I am there, and in his house of all places!"

For a few minutes she tried to answer questions and discuss the costume both at the same time, but when she finally settled to tell the story of her day in White Falls, it was evident to the two who were listening with more than their ears, that she was remembering a note of high excitement and a significance beneath the simple facts.

"After the committee meeting, when everybody had gone," she said, as she packed a hat in the tray of her trunk, "Mrs. Withington and I had luncheon in her exquisite dining room overlooking the lake. We could look out through the trees that are beginning to be a little bare, way across the water to the opposite hills where big, wide houses lie vast distances apart.

"Mrs. Withington talked to me all the time. She never stops talking unless she wants to find out something from other people, and she sat with her elbows on the table and told me about the people of White Falls I would meet some day. She said she thought by far the most interesting citizen was the paper king, a man named Nicolai Karanoff who lived in a big, wide, Moorish house that we could just glimpse through the trees. She said we must drive about town and through the park. The park is his, Mr. Karanoff's, his own private grounds; it's called Karanoff Park and his house is The Towers. There are hundreds of acres in the park, and Mrs. Withington said, 'He leaves it open to the public. He's very generous. I think myself it's because he doesn't want to put miles of fence around it; and he might as well invite the public. They'd go in anyway.'

"Of course, from that talk of Mr. Karanoff I imagined him a rich ugly old Russian with a fat wife and a fierce beard. Later when we drove around the hill and saw his house there in the sunshine something about it took my breath away." Terry paused and looked up at her aunt with a puzzled puckering of her black brows. "You know that sensation you get once in a long, long time when you see something for the first time as if it somehow belongs to you? It was as if in another life I had had such a house. I seemed to know it. It's lines were familiar . . . and dear; I felt at home. There are rows and rows of Moorish arches and slender columns; arches in a balcony upstairs and all around the porches. The house is low and wide and has wings and square towers that are beautiful. Mrs. Withington says it's a jewel of architecture, very like Mr. Karanoff's father's house near Moscow."

"Your feeling that you might once have had such a house is accounted for by your Spanish blood maybe." Bessie said this with some excitement, kindling to the idea. "Your father's Irish ancestry is the Spanish Irish that dates way back to the time when the Spanish Armada was wrecked on the shores of Ireland. Your father used to say his black hair and eyes and the black of your hair were the result of that. Even in that northern climate the Spanish persists to this day. Maybe your ancestors had Moorish palaces in Spain."

"Go on with your story," Mabel said. She was not concerned with Terry's ancestry. The Russian was the pressing interest.

"In all our driving and at Bollingers'—that's the boarding house where I am to have a big, sunny room—I kept remembering that house, dazzling white as if it were alabaster, its shining roof, and the gorgeous colors of the trees about. It was so beautiful, so still and lovely with the lake spread out at the foot of the hill! This isn't polite to you unless you choose to understand but, some-

how, the vision of that house was all wound up with a sense of freedom that came to me suddenly then. I saw myself as I have been all these years, studying so hard, doing beauty exercises, dancing—not for fun like other girls, but for training—playing little parts in summers in dusty, musty theaters, and I realized that that is over for me now, over forever. I'll be so happy. I won't be poor any more and guarded from the horrible world and kept down and urged. I'll be a teacher instead of the taught, and I'll live like the real girls whose good times are important, who are dressed and beautified and loved for their own sakes, not just to make them valuable on the stage. I was happy, happy . . ." Terry rose from before the trunk and stretched upward gracefully. She bent backward spirally, very slowly till her fingers touched the floor then righted herself with one effortless, supple movement that, by some trick of her trained muscles, brought her to her aunt's knees.

"You look hurt, Mabel. You mustn't mind that I say such things. I know why you've pushed me and guarded me; you had to. I don't regret it, but I can't help being glad I am free. I want to imagine myself having tea and talk in those gorgeous houses, sailing with young men in white flannels, the sort of men who know the theater only from the orchestra rows, not from the stage door or the wings. I felt as if I had come out of a murky valley into the hilltops and one hilltop was Mr. Karanoff's. It was a prophecy, too, just as I felt it before I had ever seen Mr. Karanoff even. Tomorrow night I shall dine there and dance there and be introduced to White Falls. Anything can happen, anything at all, after that!"

"Yes, anything can happen," Mabel agreed quickly. "Awful things can happen, and your sense of freedom may be the worst possible thing for you. You are not free in the way girls with fathers and brothers and established families are free. You are alone, Terry. You will be so alone there in White Falls that you mustn't risk a feeling

of freedom; you are destined for the stage. That, first of all, will make things hard for you in one way. Men will test you, you know that; they think stage women are their game. They assume that you are not like the sheltered, good girls of family. Oh, good gracious, I wish I had taken any offer Gus made! You'd be safe in your own work on the stage but there in White Falls . . . men like that . . . How old is this Russian?"

Mabel had risen. She walked about, picked up a blouse, only to lay it down again, and smoothed a fur boa that had been crushed under the tray of a trunk. "Tell me about him."

"I will tell you how it happened. We went down to the train at ten o'clock, Mr. and Mrs. Withington and I, and as we walked up and down the station platform I saw a big stunning man come out of the depot into the light. He was tall and broad and he walked with a sort of swagger that was rather attractive. He turned toward us and I saw his face. He wasn't so awfully old, forty maybe, and he had no fierce beard at all. Black eyes, black hair, black clothes and rather pale skin. He doesn't look American exactly; he is different. Even his voice is different.

"He recognized the Withingtons and stopped. They introduced us, but he seemed to have nothing much to say. Mrs. Withington talked anyway and told him about me, that I was returning to Chicago and was to have classes in White Falls. He just stood and looked down at me unsmilingly. I thought he wasn't interested, thought me a common little baggage, beneath his notice, and then Mrs. Withington said I was your niece. At that, of course, he cheered up a little and talked about you, and later in the train he told me he always sees your plays. He likes you and thinks your most distinguishing feature is that you look the thorough aristocrat. He likes your *Naida*. But he doesn't think *Sheep's Clothing* your best play."

"How did he happen to talk to you in the train? Wasn't it late?"

"Yes, but my berth wasn't made up and when he saw me looking for the porter he told me to come into his drawing room and he'd ring."

"Couldn't he have rung for the porter while you waited in the aisle?"

"I suppose so, but he asked me to come in and wait." Terry was talking now against the judgment of her that looked out from Mabel's expressive eyes.

"You obeyed him?" Bessie asked, her eyebrows up.

"I accepted his invitation. He told me to sit down. That is his way; he isn't suave; he doesn't smile. He said, 'Sit down' and I sat down. His eyes . . ." she paused—"are that way too."

"And what was your conversation?"

"Mostly about you. He can't understand why you aren't better appreciated here. He says you would be in Russia, and he wanted to know if playing *Queen Isabelle* didn't simply do you up in a season. I said it did, awfully. After that we got to talking about the blood and thunder tragedies and why people like them. He likes them; he liked you in *Queen Isabelle* best of all, but he said it was a horrible thing. Left him cold."

"But he liked it?"

"Oh, immensely! I told him I thought people love tragedies—murder and blood and broken hearts—because it supplies them a sort of violence that they experience vicariously. It rids them of something awful in their savage selves, and they feel better after that as if they had had a good swift fight with their worst enemy. That interested him. He wanted to know if I thought everybody had a savage self and I said I did. He said he did too."

"Since that wasn't original with you I don't know why you should have said you thought that. You have no savage self; I hope he doesn't think you have."

Terry did not answer at once. The talk had reached the point that was usual between the younger and the older generation. Women like Mabel and her mother were always ready to view young people with distrust, and when they were not sufficiently adroit to conceal the unpleasant nature of their interest, it was their own fault if they were not told the whole truth. Nobody—girl or woman, however innocent—wanted to tell a story of her experience if she were made to feel that the facts would be given a slant so oblique that the recital would of necessity take on the nature of a defense.

Terry reminded herself that she had never done anything really wrong in all her guarded life, yet she was constantly aware of suspicion. Since Mabel made it impossible for her to tell the whole story she answered, with an air of preoccupation, that she was certain Mr. Karanoff had not thought her in the least savage, and she let her voice have a soft tone of reproach when she added that he had not carried the idea so far as to make it personal.

That little discussion of the drama had been about all their talk, she said. He had been very kind, he had offered to be of service if she needed any help.

She could not tell them that he had embarrassed her by his manner, by his eyes, and by something he had said to her. She had blamed her ridiculous little round hat for the indignity, and she had forgiven him the remark as naturally as she would forgive a dog for barking. It was but his way of finding out at once what she expected from him.

Her own reaction from the discomfort of the moment was to vow that with her first extra money she would buy a hat that should impress him with her dignity, for she did want to impress him. He had impressed her; he had stimulated and challenged her and she wanted to answer that challenge.

IV

THE next day on the train Terry had plenty of time in which to exercise her happy faculty of believing what she chose to believe. Until she was settled in her Pullman chair she had not had a waking moment during the past two days for communion with the dreams she was cherishing. Even though they possessed her utterly she wanted leisure in which to possess them; to take them quietly from the cupboard of her mind and to frame, in elaborate imaginings, the pictures she had gathered in White Falls.

The first thing she had to do, however, was to make an end of her memories of hardship and discipline; they were unpleasant, and it was best to forget them. She would shut the trinity of guardians into the limbo of temporary oblivion and, choosing only to remember their love and the valuable philosophy with which they had equipped her for battle, she would set herself resolutely to anticipate her life in White Falls, which was to begin, as in a fairy tale, with a costume ball.

Mrs. Withington had told her about several interesting people besides Mr. Karanoff, and because Terry had hoped they all would one day be her friends she remembered every fact about them. She took pleasure now in lining them up for review so that, when she met them tonight, she would be able to label each with the gossip she had gleaned from her loquacious hostess.

There would be a girl named Lyda Wayne who had returned in June from Miss Eber's finishing school. Terry was anxious to meet her and see what a really finished product might be like. She would be graceful and self-possessed no doubt, with a manner that was carefully trained to conceal her consciousness of superiority, and of course she would wear a Bo-Peep costume with a picture hat.

Then there was a Caulkins family whose new brick house on the lake shore had not yet merged into the landscape. Mrs. Withington had bowed, as they passed the freshly laid sod of the lawns, to a young man who was running up from the boat landing. He had light blue eyes and dazzling teeth in a face of tan so dark that it was startling in contrast to his hair. His name was Sam, a son of the lawyer, Roger Caulkins, and his sailing parties were immensely popular. Terry hoped with a deep intaking of breath that he would invite her to sail with him some time. And there was a Dr. Field, a newcomer in the city and a classmate of Sam's at Yale, who was much too young to have a practice, but not too young, it would seem, to be a widower with a tiny son; nevertheless, he didn't look like a widower. He was extremely interesting and Lyda Wayne was making much of him socially. She had given a Sunday night supper in honor of his mother, who had come recently to keep house for her son.

And then Terry had met Clara MacRae, the nurse who had the bedroom next to hers at the Bollingers'. She was a tall, fresh cheeked girl with grave blue eyes and a smile that puckered as if she were trying to resist her appreciation of humor. Terry had seen her for only a moment and she had thought Miss MacRae did not approve of Mrs. Withington's racy introduction.

"Everybody calls her Clara; she's the society nurse of White Falls and a perfect aristocrat in white linen. Like all the Scotch in America she's descended from William Wallace; only the others are just pretenders, she is real. She eats oatmeal without sugar, and her middle name is Wallace. That proves it, I think, don't you?"

Miss MacRae had been very cordial in a quiet way and had assured Terry that she would be a good neighbor because she was gone so much. "Sometimes I am not in my room for weeks at a time to stay more than a day or two."

These people would all be at the party tonight. Mrs.

Withington had had a great deal to say about the affair that was causing a stir in White Falls. For one thing she had said that it was during the days of his convalescence from typhoid fever, when Clara MacRae had nursed him, that Mr. Karanoff had decided to open his house with a big dinner and dance. He had discussed it with Miss MacRae, and when she had asked him whom he would invite he had said, "I'll have Charlie go through the telephone book and make a list of all the people who eat with their forks." Miss MacRae had repeated the remark and now, on the eve of the party, the White Falls four hundred were playing the game of Who's Invited. Those who had received cards teased those who had not, about their shocking habit of eating with their knives.

Terry didn't believe this story because it didn't sound as Mr. Karanoff looked, and for that reason she had not repeated it to her two guardians. In fact she had not told them any of the long tale with which Mrs. Withington had regaled her about Mr. Karanoff. They would have misjudged him because they hadn't seen him, and seeing him made all the difference.

For one thing she had not told them that he was half Jew. Maybe she would never tell them; there was nothing in his face to make them guess, and since it was his Slavic father, an officer in the Czar's army, who had given his son the surname, Karanoff, there was no use in offering such information to those who might be further prejudiced against him by it.

The story had shocked Terry when Mrs. Withington told it scrappily in her ironical way. To her it was amusing, but it had sickened Terry to know he was the son of an unmarried mother and born within the Pale. The young Jewish girl was despised by her own people for giving herself to one of their persecutors, and although the officer, Karanoff, loved her enough to stand financially responsible for the education of their son, he had not married her.

Terry caught her lip between her teeth. She could hardly imagine the proud man she had met suffering the degradation of illegitimacy. His father had sent him to England to school but, between sessions, he was obliged to return to his mother, and he had borne her name. "Very Jewish," Mrs. Withington had said, "ending in stein." He had married a Jewish girl, too, when he was twenty-one, which had angered his father; yet, when his mother died, his father had given him permission and money to go to America and, as a proof of his affection, had obtained for him a passport bearing the name Karanoff. And so the young man, Nicolai, and his wife, Ekanarena, and the baby, Feodore—the names had caught in the meshes of Terry's memory and she repeated them many times on the train that day—they three had come to America to build their fortunes.

"Luck was with Nicolai," Mrs. Withington had concluded. "The third night after they landed the hotel burned, and his wife and child were never found. They were everlastingly cremated."

"Was that luck?" Terry had cried, her eyes dilating as they searched Mrs. Withington's face.

"Of course. It gave him a chance to begin over from the first with a new name and a straight nose and no encumbrances."

Terry was shocked. It might be the truth, but it was an unpleasant way of admitting it. One should look at things not always as they are but as they ought to be. Still, she said nothing, and Mrs. Withington continued, "I think he is a menace to this town. He gets control of everything of any value. The electric company is his, all the lumbering business, and the biggest of all the paper mills. He owns a railroad and a town in the Northwest and some senators and two state governors. He's as selfish as a baby at a Christmas tree. He simply helps himself to anything he wants and nobody has the nerve to stop him. . . ."

"I like him," Terry had said emphatically.

"I rather do myself, but he's caustic. He has a tongue like a razor and he uses it on women as well as men."

"I am sure"—Terry's earnest eyes grew dark with sympathy—"that a childhood like his, so tragically bitter, so full of wounded love for his mother and hatred of the whole Russian system would make any man caustic. I think it would be surprising if he were anything else."

"Perhaps. Yet the Jewish people are usually gentle under persecution. They are among the races what women are in sex, born to suffer. They seem to take it as inevitable, and they stay sweet in spite of it. But Karanoff's disposition is anything but sweet; it's like his father's, I fancy." With that Mrs. Withington dismissed the subject.

It was dismissed now from Terry's thoughts by a sudden jarring that ran shivering through the train; the brakes ground on the wheels and the car lurched several times before it stopped.

V

IT was not long after the men in her car had hurried out to learn the cause of the sudden stop before one of them returned with the information that a freight train ahead of them had been derailed. He dropped into the seat next to Terry and said, with the amiability usual to one who brings news, whether good or ill, "Two cars are completely wrecked and several others are spilled all over the tracks. The conductor says we won't move beyond this spot for three hours."

Terry tried to smile as she murmured her thanks, but she felt her lips quiver and tighten. She turned and gazed out of the window into a field where the sandy ground was brightened by pumpkins of varying sizes whose golden youth shouted reproach to the flapping cornstalks

that leaned in sear and decrepit old age above them. Her disappointment over this shattered dream was like pain. Her little triumph was not to be, and this disordered field in the wastes of Wisconsin would witness the end of her happiness, while her unknown friends in the new home city dined and danced without her.

She thought grimly of her blithe assumption that, with her departure from her guardians, she had shaken off restraint. Evidently she had succeeded in doing no such thing; for the very fact that she was to be forcibly prevented from accepting Mr. Karanoff's invitation seemed to her but further interference in her pleasure from those whom she had thought safely shut in the closet of temporary oblivion.

The droop of her lips and the troubled depths of her eyes were the only expression of her piercing regret, but the observant young man saw them evidently, for he leaned toward her to offer his assistance. "If there is anything I can do to help you, I will, you know, gladly."

Terry looked into his sympathetic face. "I must send a telegram to White Falls. Where is the nearest town from which I could telephone or telegraph?"

His response was immediate and he left her to find out. As she waited for him to return she wrote the message that should tell Mr. Karanoff of the accident. The telegram was difficult of composition because she must not write the thing she wanted most to say. To relieve her aching disappointment, however, she scribbled: "Delayed by wrecked freight train. Please, please wait the party till I come. I can't bear to miss it"—and underscored "please" and "bear" with a vehemence that brought a sudden sense of relief. Never in the world would she send so ingenuous a message to Mr. Karanoff. It was too much a piece with the round hat she despised, and her need, in her relationship to him, was to develop the poise of sophistication; but having expressed herself freely it was easier to concentrate on the message.

To keep within the limiting ten as nearly as was possible with intelligible English, was the first requisite in the technique of telegraphy as she understood it; and to send the full ten by adding such information as "Letter following. Love. All well here," even though it was not vital to the message, was part of the economy. But even with the greatest care it was not always possible to keep to ten words. Today, however, she managed rather easily. She reread her message with satisfaction in the knowledge that the tone of it was right.

Mr. Nicolai Karanoff,
Karanoff Towers,
White Falls, Wisconsin.
Train delayed several hours. Wreck ahead. Sincere regrets for tonight.

Terry Parnell.

When the young traveler returned he reported that a hand car was in readiness to take telegrams to Grayling, the next town some three miles beyond. She could be certain they would soon be on the way and in the meantime wouldn't she join a party who had gathered for the fun of a hike? "We'll keep near the tracks and there may be orchards along the way," he added persuasively. "The conductor says we need not return to the train if we prefer not to. He'll pick us up in Grayling."

But Terry would not be persuaded to join the walkers; her heart was heavy and, besides, she was wearing precious new shoes that must be spared the stress of the cinder road. Instead, she took her novel to the observation platform of her car where she could be alone with her disappointment.

The afternoon dragged for her and she found it necessary at last to abandon her book. She was reading the same page over and over, conscious only of her own unhappiness, and quite aloof from the heroine whose trouble seemed unreal compared to her own.

Across from the corn field there was a strip of woods that presented a pleasing vista toward which the October sun was sinking. It was almost five o'clock now and the great copper ball hung just above the top of a gaunt pine tree that rose from among the surrounding maples, black against the hazy illumination of the sky. In a few minutes the sun would drop behind the woods and as darkness descended Terry knew the people of White Falls would begin to make their toilets for the evening. Mr. Karanoff was doubtless very busy; perhaps at this instant he was receiving her telegram. He would read it quickly, she was sure; crumple it in his strong hand and toss it to a waste basket. "Take off a place," he would probably order briskly, "this is another regret." That would be all and she would not be missed. Perhaps, since he entertained so seldom, she would never be received in his house.

Her eyes lingered on the pine tree. How dark it was standing there in its somber isolation among the happier trees. Some lives were like that tree that, in spite of its distinguishing beauty, a beauty that defied the laws of symmetry and grace, was destined to stand alone. This tree was alone in a forest of trees; its very difference set it apart. So she had been set apart from other girls, always a little alone in a crowd, a shade more serious and held necessarily aloof by reason of the very urgency of her purpose in life. What compensation was there in such lives? Was there happiness in being different? She lifted her eyes to the top of the tree where a branch was flung out against the sun like a great shadowy wing, velvet black it lay on blazing gold; a pine tree leaning on the sun. They belonged together, these opposites, as they stood now in this moment of their union, still, somber, but outshining the flaunting colors of the season in the flaming woods.

Terry leaned forward against the iron railing and rested her cheek on her arm. The sun was dropping lower behind the heavier branches of the pine tree and as its last

lingering rays reached upward they fell warmly on her in farewell.

The porter found her there motionless in the sunset and delivered a telegram into her hand. As Terry opened it her breath caught in a swelling emotion of delight, for it was from Mr. Karanoff. It was long, a letter, and her first thought was of his extravagance.

Her eyes ran through the message rapidly, then she went back to the beginning and slowly comprehended every word he had written as he had thought of her.

10-7-08

MISS TERRY PARNELL
TRAIN NO 10 BELOW GRAYLING
WISC CENT RR

CONDUCTOR TRAIN NO 10 INFORMS ME BY LONG DISTANCE FROM GRAYLING WRECKAGE ALMOST CLEARED STOP YOU SHOULD ARRIVE WHITE FALLS ABOUT SIX OCLOCK STOP MY CHAUFFEUR TALL MAN LIVERY WILL MEET YOU STOP STATION MASTER WILL ASSIST YOU OPEN TRUNK AT STATION TO GET COSTUME STOP TELEPHONE ME FROM BALLINGERS STOP WE WILL WAIT DINNER UNTIL SEVEN THIRTY STOP MRS. WITHINGTON COOPERATES WITH ME THIS PLAN HER COMMITTEE HOPES YOU WILL DANCE FOR GUESTS TONIGHT STOP EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR INTRODUCING YOU PROFESSIONALLY IN WHITE FALLS

NICOLAI KARANOFF

VI

AT The Towers the first guests were arriving.

The orchestra was already settled in one end of the gallery that ran around three sides of the roof-high dining room and the sounds of their tunings reached the ears of a troupe of young people who had come downstairs into the great empty rooms, where they were examining each other's costumes in merry pantomime.

Although the maids and the valet in the dressing rooms

had informed each guest that masks were to be worn until after they were seated at dinner, these first arrivals seemed to be recognizing each other.

Young Dr. Field, who was trying to look both dignified and at ease in the garments of Little Boy Blue, stood at one side sensing, as he usually did in White Falls, his own strangeness.

When he had called for Lyda Wayne less than twenty minutes before, she had come downstairs wrapped in an evening coat and now without it he did not know which of a half dozen slim masqueraders she might be. The others had seemed to have no such difficulty. They were intimates; he was an outsider, and he had never felt it more keenly than at that moment.

He had come to White Falls in July to establish himself in the practice he expected to make his life work. Through his Yale classmate, Sam Caulkins, he had been introduced and he had at once made many pleasant acquaintances, even a few friends, but because the people who seemed to like him, who invited him to their most delightful entertainments and expressed their pleasure that White Falls had at last attracted a first-class young medical man, did not call him to them as their physician, he was suffering the self-torture of deep discouragement.

When old Dr. May, upon retiring, had sold his practice, his office and good will to Dr. Field for a substantial consideration, he had included, among extras not charged for, a long detailed story of White Falls' medical and hospital history, yet later, when Field became aware of the peculiar situation which he had bought for himself, he could not remember any mention of it by Dr. May.

The fact was that young Harry Field was experiencing the first despair of his life. He had been the only son of indulgent and prosperous parents and from his earliest years he had been able to satisfy his desires so easily that he had no realization of the meaning of privation.

As a boy he had aspired to football honors and he had

achieved distinction as quarterback, along with the homage of the hero worshiping high school girls, simply by exerting his natural quickness of mind and body.

In college he had won the friendship of men and delighted in the pseudo-intellectual companionship of his fellows. He learned easily and because he embraced, theoretically, the highest of moral standards he became conspicuous for the quality of his intentions and, also, to his intimates, for the depth of his remorses when he failed to measure to his own ideal.

After Yale, Johns Hopkins Medical College gave him four years of the hardest study of his young life. He found no time for student hilarity nor rumination in the realm of philosophy, and he pegged down to assimilation of the fundamentals of embryology, histology, and the like, with an ardor that found reaction during his junior year in a violent attack of romantic love. He began the summer vacation with a whirlwind courtship and married little blonde Ruth Norris in July. His parents were emphatically opposed to his marriage and shocked at his impulsiveness, but before the opening of the fall term they had furnished an apartment on Monument Street where the young couple honeymooned through the senior year of Harry's course.

Their post-graduate trip to Europe ended in Vienna. There Harry studied medicine and surgery along with Viennoise life as revealed in the beer gardens and theaters of the gay city, until the birth of little Norris gave him a more domestic interest.

At that time Harry was entirely dependent upon his father and it worried him not at all; nothing was simpler than for the elder Field to continue his allowance of three hundred dollars a month. Thus it was that when the small family returned to America young Field felt no haste to begin private practice, but chose to do some institutional work in further preparation for his great vocation.

He had been an interne in the Ridgeway Hospital for the Insane but a few months when an epidemic of scarlet fever swept through the town, and Ruth, who was not strong, was one of the first to be stricken. Before she died the baby developed scarlet fever and Harry, who had known so little discipline either through his parents or life itself, was suddenly scourged by the fates. On the stormy March day that Ruth's body was carried from the hospital in a sealed casket, Harry hung over his young son in a desperate fight for his life. They won, the grief-stricken father and the embryonic man of some twenty pounds weight, and after a long journey in the dark of convalescence pulled out, spent but successful, to face the world alone.

To Harry life presented a blank wall. There was no road around for him; he had no heart to scale its heights. He stayed on in the institution, occupying an interne's room, while a nurse and little Norris were installed in the hospital suite that Ruth had made home for them all.

At last Harry roused enough to realize that a sorrow which might submerge a man in a more cheerful environment would undoubtedly drown a man in an insane institution; under the happiest circumstances the place was depressing, and without Ruth he realized that it was unbearable. With his characteristic impulsiveness he made his wants known to his father and the result was that he bought Dr. May's practice, which had been posted for sale in Johns Hopkins.

Leaving the baby with his mother, Harry established himself in White Falls where Sam Caulkins took charge of his social career with so much energy that Harry was obliged to protest. His heart was in mourning; he had no taste for the gaieties.

About the time he realized the peculiar situation White Falls presented to a new medical man the elder Field died suddenly and his estate was found to be so involved that when it was finally settled Harry had no income at all, and

his mother's investments could be expected to yield but a pathetic twenty dollars a month.

For a time it seemed that Harry would have to return to institutional work but his mother pleaded for further trial of the White Falls practice. She brought the least beautiful of her home furnishings, after selling the best to cover moving expenses, and went pluckily about creating a home for her son and little grandson.

They settled down to a grim struggle with despair and pride. They had enough of the best in clothing to last them several years and Mrs. Field felt certain that, if her health was equal to Norrie's exacting care, they would somehow pull through, but to the young doctor the whole situation was overwhelmingly galling. He had never known money care before in his life, he had never met worry nor death nor failure, yet in the space of a few months his house was filled with these guests of darkness.

On every side he heard that he was young. It was sad that one so young should have experienced so much grief! It was strange that one so young had married! It was not to be expected that one so young could have a practice at once,—and so on until Field hated the smoothness of his brow, hated his clear gray eyes and fresh young mouth. He drew his forehead into furrows that, by effort of will, passed for lines. His square American chin became tightened into habitual pugnaciousness that was belied by the smile that sometimes quivered about his lips; he looked in the mirror as the days dragged by and wondered why his forehead did not show the marks of his suffering. It was not in the course of nature, he told himself, for a face to stay so smooth; why, like Cain, was he not branded with the scarring evidence of his fiery experience?

As he stood there in the drawing room of Nicolai Karanoff's palatial Towers the hurt of it all bit into him afresh. He tried to feel humor in the whimsical idea that Lyda and Clara had chosen well for him when they had masked him as Little Boy Blue, for he was all of that.

Not to be a Banquo he made an effort at revelry by lifting the little horn that hung over his shoulder and gave a long but not very spirited toot. In his own ears it sounded so flat that he was embarrassed and he felt a hot flush under his black domino. But nobody was noticing him. Those who had come first were intent on identifying the persons of the new arrivals who were descending the stairs in unbroken procession. Field was as alone behind his mask as if he had been invisible.

VII

HE looked about the drawing room, realizing that though he had heard it described many times in superlatives, either no one had quite done it justice or he had failed to vizualize the descriptions. The panels of silk damask, the lacework of cut marble, the brocades and heavy incrustations of gold embroidery gave a depth of elegance to every detail of the room that was quite distinct from the usual wash of decorations.

He was much more interested in this house and the personality of his host than in any of the others he might meet tonight. Mr. Karanoff he knew only by sight, but he had heard tales of him even before he had arrived in White Falls to live. Until last night, however, when Lyda Wayne and Clara had worked on his costume while he sat by, appreciative and listening, he had not heard stories that had the convincing elements of truth.

Clara knew Nicolai Karanoff as few besides his nurse can know a man. She had been in the house three weeks when he had typhoid fever and, in his loneliness and weakness, Karanoff had talked to her.

As Field thought of Clara he suddenly distinguished her from the others and smiled to think he had not recognized her large frame and long arms before. Practical as always, Clara had contrived a disguise by sewing silver

stars and crescent moons on the black satin of her best dinner gown thereby achieving an effect of Night, and she seemed happily unaware that her spangled tulle scarf did not veil the fact that she was Clara.

At that moment the orchestra sounded the first ringing notes of Meyerbeer's Coronation March. Down the hall, a heavy and elaborately decorated door that Field had noticed before swung open, and Charlie, Mr. Karanoff's secretary, made his way to Clara. They talked a moment and Field saw Clara turn and lift a finger at him.

He started toward her, wondering as he threaded the crowd if Henry the Eighth, who had just come downstairs, might be Mr. Karanoff. When he reached Clara's side she put her arm through his. "Mr. Karanoff is in his study. He wants to see me. Would you like to go in, too, and meet him?"

They were already moving toward the heavy door Charlie had left open. "Mr. Karanoff is not in costume," Clara said to Field. "Isn't that just like him? He agreed with me that masquerade was the only way to mix the social cliques of White Falls, yet today, when I learned that he himself was not going to wear a costume, he seemed surprised. He said, 'You certainly didn't expect *me* to make a monkey of myself!' "

They were at the door; Charlie said, "Miss MacRae and Dr. Field," as he bowed them into a large, book-lined room that was lighted only by the fire and one lamp on a long writing table. The place was dim but aglow with color that did not, however, touch the sharp black and white of Karanoff, who stood against the high stone of the fireplace, his watch in his hand, his eyes squinting upward through the smoke of a fresh cigarette. As he returned his watch to his pocket it caught a ray of light and flashed a metallic point.

He stepped forward, offering his hand, and followed an aloof, "How are you?" with "It's five minutes to seven and the train's been in half an hour."

Field was startled by the greeting, but he saw that the last words were addressed to Clara. He accepted a cigarette from the case Karanoff offered without so much as glancing at him, and took his stand near his host on the hearth rug.

"Yes. Miss Parnell had been at the house about five minutes when I left. She is lovely. I am so glad she is to be here tonight. I assure you, you have given her much pleasure by your invitation."

Karanoff said, "It is she who gives us pleasure. When I invited her I didn't mean to ask her to pay her way. That was Mrs. Withington's idea. She felt that it would be an advantage for Miss Parnell."

"Oh, undoubtedly. That is the real point of her appreciation."

Field saw Karanoff's black eyebrows rise quickly, but Clara had not seemed to notice. She was saying, "When I saw her in her street clothes the other day I thought her a beautiful, an unusual looking girl, but tonight I saw that she is more than that."

"More than beautiful and unusual?"

Clara considered a moment. Field knew her answer would be generous. She would not stoop to petty jealousy. "Yes. More than that. She makes an appeal. She makes one want to defend and love her. That's more, isn't it? I saw her in negligee and she seemed so little and alone." She turned to Field and explained. "She is the petite type, so well proportioned that you wouldn't call her short, so slim that you think she might be thin but she isn't thin. She is very well nourished."

Well nourished! Field repressed a smile and found himself exchanging a quick glance with Karanoff.

"Did she have her clothes?" Karanoff asked, no trace of a smile in his voice.

"Yes. She said she never was so amazingly received as when she stepped off the train."

"If those donkeys down there at the station obeyed my

orders they gave her an exhibition of service," Karanoff said. Field was noticing his voice. It was throaty, restrained. It belonged with the arrogant droop of the long eyelids and high cut nostrils, yet Field decided it was a combination of bad tonsils in childhood and his English accent.

"They gave the exhibition," Clara assured him. "Miss Parnell said they all seemed to recognize her at once; they seized the trunk she told them was hers, and had it in the baggage room and open in a minute. She has two costumes for tonight. The one she will wear at dinner is gorgeous, but the one that she will dance in later. . . ."

Clara included Field as she asked, "I suppose you men have seen these Duncan dances in Europe?"

They both nodded, still smiling faintly into her bright face.

"Well . . . There's one that she says is for her dawn dance. It has red berries on the shoulders all frosted with dew, and leaves for her hair. It is nothing . . . nothing! She says it is the blue mist of dawn. I suggested that the fruit was her breakfast. She wears no stockings or shoes with it. Bare feet. . . ."

"Beautiful," said Field, but without enthusiasm. He preferred a brisk chorus to the classic dances.

Karanoff said nothing. His inscrutable gaze was on Clara's face.

From his look it was evident that he either liked Clara very much or he was intent on reading her opinion of the young dancer. Field wondered. Clara herself was so genuine that it was probable Karanoff found in her refreshment from the toadying sycophants who sought him. Yet he had said to Clara one day during his convalescence, and she had told it as if it were merely amusing, "You're a woman to put on a pedestal, Clara. There's no question as to your quality; you stand four square to the wind. If you weren't so unapproachable I'd ask you to marry me."

Clara's first reaction to that speech was her interest in the fact that Karanoff considered marriage. "Certainly I consider marriage. I must marry. I must have an heir. There is no one either in Russia or America to whom I want to leave my property. I must have a wife and sons —I have already delayed too long."

"Those were his exact words," Clara had told Field. "I am glad he didn't offer me the job. Nicolai Karanoff is interesting, he is brilliant, he is rich, but I wouldn't be one of his women for all the money in America."

"Did you tell him that?" Field had asked her.

"Something like that. He knows perfectly well what I think of his moral liberties. He has no religion, no ideals that I can discover. In such things you and he don't even speak the same language. Women are sacred to you; to him they are—game, and he's a game hunter. When he talks about his business and himself you glimpse the best of him. He is his own god and business is his heaven. Of course you have heard that he thinks himself the reincarnated Napoleon."

Field said he had heard it but had discredited it entirely. It was the sort of gossip he could not believe.

"But he does," Clara had insisted. "He has a most beautiful miniature on ivory of Napoleon. It stands usually on his study table. It is framed in jewels—brilliants probably—in the tri-colors with the letter N at the top; rubies, sapphires and diamonds and that is framed in gold so that the jewels are under glass. While he was in bed he had me bring the picture up from the study and he'd lie silent, gazing at the Emperor, or he would talk about Napoleon's generalship.

" 'If I had lived when wars were stirring, Clara,' he said one day, 'I might have been to Russia what Napoleon was to France. But when I was a young chap hot with militaristic ambition, Russia was stultifying in the poisoned air of imperialism; France and Prussia were sleeping dogs and England was devoting her attention to the

colonies.' When he talks in that way I never forget what he says. He has the elements of greatness but he lacks soul. He is utterly, hideously selfish."

His father had been an officer in the czar's army, Field remembered, yet he had spoken of Russia as stultifying in the poisoned air of imperialism. That attitude of mind, no doubt, was the result of the conflict in which he had suffered; admiration of his father whom he nevertheless hated for his sins, and the torment of his mother's race under the system.

The man was fatuous. He believed himself a Napoleon and he was a Napoleon of finance, yet if he had had military genius as he believed, he might have organized the Jews against imperialism. War against all his father stood for on behalf of his mother's race. . . .

"May we come in?"

A pair of masqueraders hesitated in the door before advancing on the group by the fire. Karanoff gave them a brief welcome and frowned with amused inquiry at the woman, who, to judge by her garments, had but recently escaped from the most elaborate of harems. She was escorted, suitably, Field thought, by Henry the Eighth.

The queen of the harem pointed an accusing finger at Karanoff. By the gesture and the flippancy of her tone when she spoke, Field knew her to be Mrs. Withington. "You're not dressed in costume! And you are hiding in here while your guests languish beyond the circle of your fascination!"

Karanoff raised an eyebrow and put the hand that held his cigarette behind him.

"He doesn't know he's having a party," Henry the Eighth joked loudly.

He was pulling at his mask and as he lifted it he revealed the florid countenance of the mayor, John Riley. "He thinks he's in a hotel. 'Let the people alone' is his motto." He waved his hands as he talked to suggest

Karanoff's large ideas of hospitality. "After the guests have languished a while longer he will step out and give them a treat."

"In Russia, in all of Europe," Karanoff said gravely, "receiving is done this way. An invitation offers a guest the house. The guest is supposed to enjoy the house without removing it. Charlie did this party, he's out there with Carter managing things."

"I like that idea," Mrs. Withington exclaimed. "If I dared I'd never receive my guests, and before they left I'd go to bed. I simply loathe standing by the door and saying good-night."

The mayor agreed with her. "I remember once when Mrs. Riley disgraced herself by telling a departing guest that she had had a lovely time. She was sleepy and so tired of hearing the same old farewell bromide that she got her speeches mixed."

"Exactly. One usually does and no wonder!" Mrs. Withington nodded at him but turned to Karanoff. "You know, of course, about Miss Parnell? I offered to wait and bring her here, but she said your chauffeur was coming back for her. She will be quite late."

"Yes. There's no sense in it. Women and their things. . . . She is a very beautiful young woman. She doesn't need to paint the lily."

"Perhaps you don't know. Perhaps the lily was freshly painted when you met her and is in need of a new coat now."

Karanoff smiled into her pert face as if he were pleased with his own thoughts. "No," he said, with emphasis. And added, "I know when they're painted."

VIII

WHEN dinner was announced Field took the card from the little envelope bearing his name, that he had found on the tray in the dressing room, to be certain he remembered correctly that it had directed him to table three in the gallery. Because of the masks, he was not given the name of his dinner partner and, being free to go out as he pleased, he stayed near Clara MacRae.

Of his few new friends in White Falls, Clara MacRae was his greatest comfort. He understood exactly what Karanoff had felt when he had said that he would ask her to marry him if she were not so unapproachable.

He could say the same thing and mean it, for with her unapproachableness she combined maternal qualities, a warm strength, and an understanding of physical frailties that made her a very fortress of friendship.

Frailties of character, however, she seldom either understood or forgave and Field, at times, had the uncomfortable sensation of needing cover from her downright judgments. She wanted her friends to believe exactly as she believed, to agree with her, and to discuss their common ideals as a small community of patriots might discuss their native land were they on alien soil; and these ideals were the flag they saluted and zealously waved at an indifferent world. Field shared her ideals by inheritance from his mother and was willing enough to talk of them but he wondered at times why Clara felt it necessary to make herself conspicuous by flaunting the brilliant colors of her flag.

Tonight, however, he was in no mood to criticize her. She was affectionate and generous to such degree that he found his surest solace in her and he needed the solace that only a woman of her peculiar talents could give him.

As he followed her up the spiral staircase to the gallery,

under an arched ceiling of mosaics that hung heavy over his unconscious head, along a rug-hung railing that he hardly saw, he was remembering the first time she had shown him professional preference.

She had been called one night to the house of a Karanoff mill worker whose wife was suffering excruciating pain, and when she had learned that Dr. Bennig had not yet arrived although they had sent for him two days before, she had told the distraught husband to get Dr. Field.

Fortunately Field was in his office. It was a hot night and he had longed to go out alone on the lake, but slavery to his telephone was part of the price of success for a doctor and, though his faithfulness was not often rewarded, on that night he received the call and was soon listening to Clara's explanation.

As she talked he threw off his coat and slipped into a sterile gown that he might be ready for the work of relief. The case sounded like peritonitis and Clara believed there was not a moment to lose, yet when he bent above the sick woman, looking—Clara told him later—like a clean young viking, the patient had recoiled from his touch.

Field knew instantly what that manner meant. He was too young, and he was not Dr. Bennig, whose popularity was one of the idiosyncrasies of White Falls. Bennig, a drunken, rolling, beast of a fellow whose sinister fascination held a host of the simple and the sophisticated alike, was a force he could not combat.

"I'd rather have Bennig so drunk he had to hold on to the bed for support than any other man sober," was a common remark in Field's presence.

He had studied the man from several angles; he had tried, in the name of high ethics, to be fair to him, but he had found him indifferent to discussion of his own profession, ungracious yet strangely fascinating. His one outstanding quality, Field believed, was that peculiarly fascinating personality that made it possible for him to blunder with the scalpel and yet to know that if he smiled,

the suffering victim would forgive him and return for more.

Field turned from the sick woman to Clara. "We can't wait for Bennig," he said.

"No." Clara understood that he wanted her to speak for him. She said, including both the patient and her husband, "Dr. Field must do what is necessary now or we both will have to leave you. I will not take the responsibility alone."

"Go then," the woman cried, her head rolling on her pillow with pain. "*I* can wait for Dr. Bennig if you can't." Her hands clutched at the bed covering. "Look at him," she said, indicating Field. "He's not twenty-five, I know. He has no wife. He doesn't understand women. I won't have him."

Clara's eyes blazed with indignation. She was about to speak when Field put his hand on her arm: "Don't argue," he said. "I'm going. I'll pull Bennig out of his wallow at the club and kick him up here."

He had not kicked him up there, had not even sought him at the club. Instead he brooded more despairingly than ever on that second horn of his dilemma in White Falls. Bennig had been the idol of the people for twenty-five years. For love of him they had given the city a hospital although the fashionable took their surgery to Chicago, and Bennig dominated the hospital as Karanoff dominated the business enterprise of the place.

Old Dr. May, having no gift for obstetrics or surgery, had jogged along comfortably as an internal medicine man, "a diagnostician," he called himself importantly. As he sent his surgical cases to Bennig when they became too desperate for mere pills the two men never came to the point of enmity though little love was lost between them; but when Dr. May left, his most important patients either went over into the Bennig camp or called for Dr. Hodge, whose specialty in diseases of the ear, eye, nose and throat

did not prevent his acceptance of other cases not included in that list.

Field's loneliness in the peculiar situation he had bought for himself, was intensified by the complacency of his friends. Not even the Caulkins family sympathized with his enforced inactivity and, to his observation one night at dinner with them, when Field had said briefly, "I am beginning now to understand what Oliver Wendell Holmes meant when he said, 'The study of medicine is heaven, the practice is hell,' " Mrs. Caulkins had replied,

"Oh, but, my dear boy, nobody *expects* a young doctor to have any *patients*. That is part of the profession, the waiting. You must enjoy your leisure while you have it."

Enjoy! Field tramped homeward that night sick with the drag of waiting. Enjoy his leisure while he sat behind his sign praying the Lord to make him look as old as he felt?

Well—he roused himself. Clara was talking to him over her shoulder. "Here we are, the last to arrive at table three. You're by me. I arranged the seating of all the guests, you know, and I chose you."

Field made a Boy Blue bow as he drew out her chair. Below in the well of the dining room Karanoff was doing a similar duty for Madame King, whose paper mills, second only to Karanoff's own, gave her the rôle of dowager of White Falls. A plutocracy, certainly, was this little western city and yet on Karanoff's left was an empty chair that probably was for the young dancer. In any plutocracy, Field thought, beauty had its front seat, especially if it were for sale.

"I see our host is making your new neighbor conspicuous by her absence," he said to Clara. They had lifted their masks to the hum of laughter and talk and Field observed his companions as they emerged from their disguises while Clara answered him. "Yes. I had put Mrs. Riley—the mayor's wife—on Mr. Karanoff's left but he

has changed things to suit himself. . . ." Her voice died under a morsel of caviare and she smiled as Field, raising his cocktail glass, toasted her with his eyes; but when she spoke again it was to say practically, ignoring the invitation in his glance, "You know everybody at this table, don't you? I have put you among your friends."

Yes, he was among his friends. Sam Caulkins and Mr. Riley; Pearl Withington and Lyda Wayne, who would snap up any suggestion he might make for a flirtation. Good company, good food, beautiful surroundings were his for the next hour at least. He must cheer up.

He looked about, smiling, and knew as he made the effort that cheer was an impossibility for him tonight. The splendor of the room, the paintings and pottery against the walls, the great center pieces of exotic flowers, deepened his depression. The display was too lavish. It hurt to sit in the midst of such sumptuousness and know that his mother, who had had every comfort in her journey through life, was, in her old age, reduced to physical labor for his sake and his son's.

He felt no sting of bitterness, no socialistic rebellion against the inequality of wealth. Karanoff had started as penniless as he, and what he had earned, or taken by conquest, was his to spend as he chose, but Field preferred not to put himself into the position of debtor for a sort of hospitality that he could never hope to return. Yet here again he was in the trap of circumstances for he could not advertise, must not be aggressive and therefore he must play the social life for its full value.

"Keep yourself in the public eye," was one of the rules, and "marry a rich one," was another. He worked hard at the first rule but told himself he scorned the second. Then Lyda Wayne was thrust upon him by Sam Caulkins as the solution of his problem.

"Marry Lyda. She has a bushel of money and you'd be a public benefactor if you tamed her."

Field looked across the table at her and was unhappy.

She was strikingly pretty in a wide-eyed sparkling way; her fine light hair contrasted with her brown eyes delightfully and her facile mouth had little tricks of expression that constantly revealed her gleaming teeth. She was slender and dainty and audacious and made no secret of her infatuation for Field.

He had liked her at first. Her buoyant temperament poured a refreshing spray of merriment into their conversations that, on his part, were reserved and a little wary; but his gravity in no way repressed the flow of her spirits. She was a bubbling fountain; she had no depth, and when Field's need was for quieter waters he found the eternal plash of her nonsense an irritation.

IX

NEVER in all her nineteen years had Terry known such happiness as began with the reading of Nicolai Karanoff's long telegram. The most she had expected was a message at Mrs. Bollinger's asking her to come over and dance late in the evening not because she was wanted for herself but because her patronesses would think it best to take advantage of Mr. Karanoff's offer.

Now she knew that Mr. Karanoff's thought and plans for her meant that he had liked her personally, not as a dancer but as a social being, and that he had wanted her enough to feel something of disappointment when he had received her telegram.

At the station she had been met and her trunk speedily managed by "tall man livery," who whirled her away in a limousine up the winding street to Mrs. Bollinger's door; he had carried her bag and costumes up into her own bedroom and had then told her he would telephone Mr. Karanoff who, he was certain, would want him to wait for her while she dressed.

Having done all that without flutter or waste of energy,

he had stepped out and closed the door as if to say, "Now dress. It is the only thing we expect of you."

But she had not begun to dress on the instant because, for a moment, she had to stand still, drawing deep breaths of happiness while she looked about her new room. To her it was beautiful, a refuge, a very heaven of privacy and cleanliness such as she had never known with her mother. It had received her with a prime stillness to which she must respond with a little ceremony of silent appreciation. Indeed, the fresh ruffled curtains, the neatness and soapy freshness were like a quaint little girl with smooth braids and starched petticoats shyly waiting to be recognized.

What high, what deep moments was this room to witness? The lips of fate brushed her eyelids with the kiss of promise and in that instant of blindness she thought she saw through far vistas to her destiny. Not the stage, not dancing, not poverty were to be her lot, but something of which her costume for the evening was typical. She had chosen it because it was her favorite of all her rôles, but it also had chosen her. . . .

As she dressed, speeding through her toilet between interruptions from Miss MacRae, Mrs. Withington and Mrs. Bollinger, who came with offers of help, she was more conscious of Nicolai Karanoff than of the details of her dressing—his inscrutable face, the heavy-lidded insistent eyes and his peculiar throaty voice that she had decided was a fashionable voice because it had a tone of aloofness. If he—if only some spirit of miracles—would touch him and make him want to adopt her. . . . If he would say—"I have always dreamed of a daughter to be the sunlight of my days. I lost a child, you know . . . once long ago. . . ." If he would say that and take her to The Towers to live so that every day would be replete with such beings as "tall man livery," with dinners and dances and fresh ruffled rooms!

With the dream all spun and shining like a dew-jeweled

spider web in the sun she smiled and named it silly. The Nicolai Karanoffs of this world did not adopt young women after making such remarks as his that had embarrassed her two nights ago. He had not thought "daughter" when he looked at her but—"plaything" and that danger she had been taught, warned against, guarded from, since she was ten years old. Nevertheless she could pretend; for to be the petted daughter of a fascinating foreigner who permitted her to radiate the sunshine of his days while she danced and flirted with such nice boys as the Sam Caulkins whom she had seen for a flashing instant, and the Dr. Field whose story had touched her sympathy, would be such bliss, and really, when you thought of it, so very, very easy and pleasant for him. . . .

As she clasped the last bracelet high on her arm she went to the window that looked down on the street and peered out at the waiting motor. It was still there, its lamps dimmed, its long bulk of glass and varnish refracting the rays of light that shone on it from the Bollinger windows. A minute more and she would be rolling toward The Towers.

The excitement cooled in her eyes, her face was grave. The time had come for her to begin to be the rôle she had chosen. By inheritance and training that was her habit. With the donning of the garments of a part she became that part, and tonight she must have the dignity and poise of royalty, the simplicity of high mindedness. She must be Oriental, proud, shy. . . . Surely such qualities, made definite by her beautiful silver robe and head dress, would counteract the effect of the despised round hat.

She was following an instinct that she did not try to analyze, because she thought she understood it. To her it was the simplest thing in the world to want to please this man who stood, in her sight, for romance; and not once in the swift drive to The Towers did she think of herself as the new dancing teacher with responsibility toward a critical committee. She forgot her patrons; her

only thought was of Karanoff, but no realization of the eternal verity that this call was her summons to a place in the scheme of the race, touched her thought. It was too intensely individual to have ethical significance for her. She was an Egyptian princess, daughter of the great Rameses, about to meet the potentate of another kingdom. She must make him feel that she too had power, different from his but not less desirable. And because she was that princess by the time she arrived at The Towers, she accepted the service given with much more assurance than she had felt at the station.

"Tall man livery" handed her from the car, a young man in evening clothes whom somebody called Charlie received her and passed her on with the utmost deference to a maid who led her into her dream. She saw the princess that was herself reflected in a long mirror where the rose of shaded lamps lay warmly on the silver cloth that sheathed her body and fell from her shoulders in a shimmering train. Around her waist a rope of blue green stones hung like a cord and swayed as she moved while the same stones studded her bracelets and blazed in the filigree pectorals that emphasized her breasts. Royalty was suggested by towering ostrich plumes. They rose in a crown from the band of jeweled silver around her head, and the soft line of her American profile was given an Egyptian slant by heavy pendants that hung from her ears.

When she went down the palace stairs walking toward her audience with the king, his gentleman in waiting again received her and led her to the door of the throne room where voices and music, candle light and myriad faces blended in a strange, delightful blur. She saw Sir Charlie raise his hand and in response the king whom, until that instant, she had not seen, rise and move toward her. Sir Charlie bowed her in and she was walking forward slowly, conscious of swaying rope of jewels in front and dragging silver of train behind, toward his majesty, who peered

with a look of slight inquiry as she advanced. She saw that he did not recognize her; he couldn't find the young person of the round hat in this royal daughter who walked to meet him, but their hands met and he was smiling and saying abrupt things as he led her to a place on his left.

When he drew out her chair the blur cleared and she saw the long table so that every detail was photographed on her memory. She heard the king say, "At last you are here. I should not have been so impatient if I had known you had to come all the way from Egypt." He made a gesture of introduction—"Ladies, gentlemen, this is Cleopatra. There was a wreck on the Nile and she is a little late."

The men had risen, staring. The women nodded from their places as Terry sank into her chair.

"I know now why I was inspired to keep out of costume myself," Karanoff said, leaning toward her when the murmur of interrupted conversation was resumed about them. "It was to leave me free to assume any rôle I chose according to circumstances. I have decided that I am Marc Antony." His unwinking gaze was fixed on her face.

"Marc Antony?" she repeated. "I am disappointed. I'm not Cleopatra. I am Pharaoh's daughter and not contemporary with Marc Antony, and besides . . ." She hesitated.

"Besides what?"

"I had been thinking of you . . . as a king."

His quick smile told her that she had pleased him, but he said, "Marc Antony was of the stuff of kings . . ." and after a pause while he looked at her with a shifting of the light in his eyes, "So you won't play Cleopatra to my Marc Antony? Well . . . you see the advantage of my costume. Who am I? Give me a name."

Terry tasted the caviare canapé that had been set before her.

"I suppose Marc Antony suits your type. Perhaps there is a Cleopatra here, somewhere, for you. . . ."

"Of course, if you don't want me . . ." Karanoff's eyes narrowed. "I am remembering Bible history, young lady. There was a king who ruled the Hittites. He had no love for Pharaoh. I might just do things my own way and take you captive. How would you like that?"

"I wouldn't like it." Terry was delighted with their play and to keep her tone a shade indifferent cost her an effort, but she succeeded in looking at him with sorry eyes. "My father would make war on you and you probably would be killed. That wouldn't please me. If you insist on being king of the Hittites you had better keep on your side of the pasture, but if you'd like to be near me you might be Pharaoh, my father. . . . He was very important, you know. Rameses second!"

Karanoff laid down his fork and leaned on the table. He looked at her as if her audacity had bereft him of speech. She had played faster than he. He had no retort.

Terry raised her napkin to her lips to cover her smile, but the eyes that looked from under her lashes danced with teasing laughter.

"Do I deserve this from you?" he pleaded in a low voice. "I thought Pharaoh's daughter was gentle and kind. You are snubbing me."

"No. No." She widened her eyes and threw out her hands in protest. "You misunderstand! Pharaoh's daughter was gentle and kind, but she wasn't the sort to have a Marc Antony. Except for her father there was only one other—Moses. . . . She adopted Moses, you remember."

She waited for his answer, smiling, glad that she had played her rôle with wit, but there was a shadow in her eyes as she looked at him. Old as he was—twice her age or more—he wouldn't even pretend to be her father.

X

IT was true that off the stage as well as on, out of novels as well as in, Romance sometimes worked as surely as the multiplication table.

Save for a few little disappointments in the people she met—a need for slight readjustment of her conceptions of them—the evening was fulfillment of Terry's dream.

In the blithe Sam Caulkins she met one small disillusionment. He was very amusing at first, acting with the utmost realism, his rôle of infant; but later when she danced with him she found that his mind was really infantile and that he could only make the silliest nonsense of her serious talk. He used slang constantly and to something she said, which she had thought would bring an intelligent response from a Yale graduate, he cried, amiably, "Oh, fall off that high-brow stuff when you're with me!"

Lyda Wayne was exactly his sort and Mrs. Withington's sort for Lyda, who to Terry's amusement was really in Bo-Peep costume and a picture hat, talked more like the undesirable girls of the theater from whom her aunt had so zealously guarded her than Terry's conception of an Eber School graduate. Of course the difference was great, the likeness merely superficial, for Lyda had tradition, family background, and money which gave her freedom to assume the manners of the gutter-snipe if she chose, without cost of caste, but Terry wondered if sometimes she didn't lose by it. She had watched Dr. Field as he listened to Lyda, and had seen the glint of criticism in his eyes. Lyda had seen it herself for she said, when Dr. Field moved away from them, "He's too serious. He takes himself so hard, but he's the poor live husband of a dead wife and we shouldn't blame him, I suppose."

Terry thought she understood Dr. Field. She liked him

as well as she had supposed she would like Sam Caulkins, but save for her talks with Mr. Karanoff she did not stay long enough with any one person to know certainly whether she liked them or not.

Before they left the dinner table Mr. Karanoff had explained that he did not dance, but that he would claim her for several strolls about the house; he would show her the pictures in the gallery of the dining room; he wanted to take her out to the stables. But the first stroll so prolonged itself that there was no other and instead of beginning with the pictures in the beautiful gallery that Terry had seen from her place at the dining table, Mr. Karanoff, leading her from the ball room into the hall, said that he wanted her to meet Storm and Smoke.

He sent a maid to get a wrap for Terry. "Anybody's wrap," he said, and while they waited he explained in short phrases bitten off by the teeth that hardly seemed to part when he talked in his fashionable voice, that Storm was his favorite horse and Smoke was his dog.

"The grooms will lock up soon, so we'll go there first."

It seemed strange to Terry that they should go to a stable; surely it was not the place for her in her costume sandals. Karanoff laid the cloak about her shoulders—a strange cloak that the maid had chosen for its style evidently—and before she could stoop to lift her train he had hung it over his arm and slipped that same arm beneath hers so that she was locked close to his side.

As they went through the short passage at the back of the house that opened into a paved courtyard Terry felt the tremor of a sharp recoil. Karanoff had stopped talking, and in her sudden panic she could think of nothing to say. She wanted to draw back, especially she wanted to possess her own arm and hold her own train, but she could make no resistance and alone, together, they stepped down to the pavement.

The door clicking to behind them had shut them away from the sounds of the ball room and by the tension of his

arm against hers in the silence Terry knew Karanoff was telling her to listen and sense the stillness of the night. She drew a deep breath of the tonic air to steady her nerves and lifted her face to the darkness.

High above them a gentle wind moved through the tree tops, and against the sky she saw the swaying branches sweep like brushes, over the stars, and back. On a white stucco wall that was broken by an arched door an iron bound lantern of ancient design illumined a patch of Virginia creeper, and the bright blood red of it was like a rose pinned on the breast of night.

Far away, stretching from them in every direction was the park, and below, somewhere in the starlight, lay the lake; they were at the center of still immensity. Slowly Karanoff began to move toward the door in the wall. His arm held hers close, her plumes blew softly, hiding his face from her, and still the panic gripped at her heart. This was romance; this was poetry; but she was afraid. At the table she had been at ease because she was prepared and he was not, now they were on his ground and she felt alone, inadequate to whatever tests he meant to subject her to.

A wave of nostalgia caught her like pain when he put his hand on the knob of the door in the wall. He was talking but she did not know what he said until he bent close to her around the blowing plumes. "You are trembling. Is it too cold for you? Your arm is shaking." He drew her closer.

"Yes." Her teeth chattered and she tried to laugh. "It was so warm inside," she managed to say, but she was fearful of what lay beyond the door.

They were in an enclosure formed by the wall and three low buildings with jutting eaves like beetling eyebrows above the swaying lanterns that set the shadows swinging.

Karanoff had quickened his pace, and Terry ran along beside him toward a wide door that stood slightly ajar

and from which a light shone in one long wedge of brightness.

"I've brought a guest to see Storm," Mr. Karanoff announced as he opened the door and three stable boys, who looked like jockeys, jumped to attention.

This was a stable! Terry blinked in the bright light and looked about at the whitewashed stone of the walls, at the neat cupboards and freshly scrubbed floor. Then Storm was led toward her and she was shown his points; one of the boys quartered an apple for her to offer on her palm, and while she fed Storm and caressed his soft nose Karanoff stood, one hand in his pocket, the other holding her train as if it were an empty sack that he had by the neck, biting off questions that he seemed to want answered with a brief yes or no. Certainly his manner was not of one making conversation for he clipped the tail of each reply with a fresh question. Do you like horses? Do you ride? Have you had much experience? Jump? Why not?

"Let's go into the harness room." There Karanoff hung the train over his own arm and himself opened a case of shining glass upon harness that he said was all silver mounted. He stooped and lifted a corner of her borrowed coat. "If this white satin lining shows soil from being rubbed on any piece of this silver I'll buy a new coat for the owner," and he rubbed first one, then another silver ornament before triumphantly spreading the satin beneath her eyes.

"Your mother's best silver teapot isn't cleaner than that."

Terry's confidence and the warm glow of happiness that had possessed her before, were returning. Her panic had fled out into the darkness and left her with a desire to frolic.

"I'll tell you something that will surprise you," she said, leaning toward him, her eyes wide with roguishness.

"What?" said Karanoff, intent on her face.

She whispered the surprise. "My mother has no silver teapot."

Karanoff laughed with sudden and real mirth, the first she had heard from him.

"Are you a poor girl?" he asked as if to say, "Are you an American?"

"Yes," she answered, "I very much am. I've always hated it terribly till just this minute, and now I don't believe I mind."

She was perverse; her moods varied as rapidly as she could express them. From an agony of homesickness and fear she had swung to a childish gaiety and she played with Smoke, petted Storm again, and talked with Karanoff until he reminded her that they must see the pictures.

As they retraced their steps the scene seemed strange again because of the swinging lanterns and the beetling eyebrows of the stables, but she was glad for the warmth of Karanoff's arm against her own and she spoke softly of the tree tops that were burnishing the stars. Romance. Romance spinning its shining threads about her . . .

Karanoff was asking her further questions about herself which she answered freely and without self-consciousness. He wanted the truth and she was perfectly willing that he should have it since he was seeking without innuendo and with something of sympathy in his directness.

"You are out entirely on your own now?" he asked her when they were in the gallery but as oblivious of pictures, of mosaic arched ceiling and rug-hung railing as young Dr. Field had been a while before.

"Yes. I must earn my living alone. All my life I have played in the summers when I could get an engagement—juvenile parts and ingenue—but that was just enough to keep me through vacation time; then when I went back to school each fall Mother and Mabel paid

my way. Now they expect me to take care of myself, and soon I shall have to help my mother. I must succeed. I dare not fail."

Karanoff was leaning with one shoulder braced against the twisted column of an arch; Terry opposite him ran the rope of blue stones through her fingers. She was looking at the glistening bauble as she talked, pleasantly conscious that his gaze was intent on her.

She raised her eyes, and met his look serenely, assuring herself once more that though there was no lack of concentration in his scrutiny it was not the embarrassing ordeal he had inflicted on the train. She could endure any amount of interested inquiry but, strangely—for she was secure in consciousness of innocence—she could not sustain the affront of doubt.

When he said, "Are you as simple as you seem?" she laughed outright.

Asking was one way of finding out, surely, and she said so.

"I want to know," he told her.

"Well, I am," she admitted, smiling. "Do you believe me?"

"It happens that I do."

And still he stood leaning in the arch regarding her.

A servant, thin lipped, a little bent, with fine gentle eyes, whom Terry had noticed before, found them there. "Mr. Karanoff, Mrs. Withington is looking for Miss Parnell. It is time, she says, for her to dance."

As they followed slowly Terry said, "Who is he? I have noticed him and I like him."

"You do? You like him? That's good. He's Carter, major domo of The Towers. My bed and board are Carter's responsibility."

XI

EARLY in the evening Dr. Field discovered that the most interesting entertainment for him lay in watching for glimpses of his host and the young dancer whose entrance into the dining room had been of such dramatic moment.

He recalled Karanoff's intent regard of Clara in the study as she had talked about Miss Parnell and decided that he had been thinking not of Clara then, but of the other, whom, quite evidently to many besides himself, he was watching with keen inquiry. All through the house it was possible for the ear attuned to the subject, to catch suggestions that here in their midst the spider was making selection of a fly.

Clara said to Field during their first dance together, "I intend to see to it that our young friend knows exactly the sort of man Karanoff is before she's twenty-four hours older. If he adds her scalp to his collection it won't be because I haven't done my duty, but really I think he has marriage in his mind. You know I told you that he said—'I have already delayed too long.'"

"But," said Field, "is he likely to want to make a poor, unknown girl mistress here at The Towers? Isn't it far more possible that he will find his sort of beauty in Washington where his social life is?"

"No." Clara was emphatic. "Besides, she isn't a nobody in his world. She is Mabel Spencer's niece and she was named for Ellen Terry, who was her father's friend, but he told me that time when he was ill that one reason he had not married was that he couldn't go through the long, time-consuming twaddle of courtship. He said, 'I want to pick a wife the way I choose a horse, for beauty and health and good temper, and have it over. Women subtleties and women evasions annoy me; as a

sex they play a game I despise.' I don't think he wants a wife as a companion for himself, as a friend, you know. He wants children; an heir's the point with him. Otherwise, he wouldn't marry."

Encouraged by Field's attention, she continued to quote Karanoff as she might recite the symptoms of a freak case of a well established ailment. They stopped dancing by mutual consent and strolled to a niche in the ball room where they could watch the young stranger whose pagan raiment was strikingly relieved by the infant dress and blue rosetted bonnet of Sam Caulkins with whom she was dancing.

"Sam," said Field, following them with his eyes, "was bowled over by her. When she came into the dining room I thought he was going over the railing."

Clara shrugged. "He's always that way. He'll tell us what a 'queen,' what a 'peach' she is for a season and then it will be someone else. But Karanoff is different. I was telling you that he said he wanted a poor girl. 'The rich ones are the deuce to please,' he said, 'and I don't need their money.' Of course he, himself, isn't the deuce to please!" Field smiled at the vehemence of her indignation. "I asked him why he didn't take one of the lovely girls out of his office. Really you know the Karanoff mills have the choice of the prettiest girls in White Falls just because he is unmarried. Isn't it terrible that so few people have minds above money? To how many do you suppose service is happiness, even among idealists like you and me?"

"Precious few," Field murmured, hoping she did not intend to wave the flag, but Clara had continued.

"When I asked him why he didn't marry someone from his own office if he wanted her poor and willing and beautiful, he said they were too willing and he *winked* at me! I have heard that he has a favorite speech he likes to make when he suspects a girl of playing for his attention. He calls her into his private office, comments

on her work, and says, 'And if you please, Miss Smith, don't fuss with your back hair all the time. We are making paper in this mill, not matches. When I ring for you I want to give instructions and I don't care whether your belt is pulled down in front or not. When I sent for you yesterday something in your manner brought to my mind a matrimonial bureau. Please remember this hereafter!' "

Field said, "He's a beast! To say that stuff when really he doesn't know . . . He can't prove it. That's rotten, I think."

When a little later he saw Karanoff putting a coat about the shoulders of the young dancer he wondered if perhaps the affair had gone further already than they knew. He forgot his own troubles as he watched for their return and when Mrs. Withington told him they were looking everywhere for Miss Parnell, he was able to give the information that he had seen her go up the gallery stairs with Mr. Karanoff.

It was but a few minutes after that until they came into the ball room. Miss Parnell, her train over her arm, looked as flower-like as if she had just waked from a refreshing nap, but she was an actress and one could not expect to read her experience or her emotions in her face if she chose not to show them.

After the guests had settled themselves to listen, she was introduced by Mrs. Withington in a characteristic little speech that announced the dancer's program. She would first give them a reading—the lovely poem *Pharaoh's Daughter,* by Vernon Long, their own Wisconsin poet—and after that she would change her costume for the typical Duncan interpretations for which they were all so eager. . . .

Although he settled himself to listen critically beside Lyda, whose whispered comments were shrewdly uncomplimentary, Field found the poem a moving thing and given with a simplicity that saved it from the usual over-

done quality he disliked off the stage. At the end, as he watched the Egyptian princess lift the infant Moses from his basket, to words and meter that suggested the winds of the Nile singing in the rushes, he was himself so stirred that he would have forgotten to look for the effect on Karanoff had not Lyda nudged him.

Karanoff was standing in the doorway, his head dropped forward, his eyes lifted. There was nothing in his look to indicate that he felt other than did Field himself—stirred by the old story so told and acted that the fundamental hunger of the human heart for a child was revealed again with tenderness and power. Had it been less artfully done, Field himself would have been quick to feel distaste for the sentimental, but it was right; yet the whole theme played so adroitly into Karanoff's own desires that it hardly seemed possible the young actress could be ignorant of his ambition. If her sincerity was of her own soul rather than a matter of her art, he hoped Clara would act as her guardian against Karanoff, even though she were self-appointed.

As he looked about to locate Clara and perhaps exchange a glance with her, he saw that Karanoff had been trying to catch his eye. He signalled a response and Karanoff beckoned with a backward nod.

Field rose at once, climbed past Lyda and out of the group to follow Karanoff down the hall, where he was moving about, his gaze on the rug as if he were intent on its pattern or, with an owner's eye, was taking note of its condition.

As the young man walked toward him, still conscious of his desire to have Clara stand guardian for the girl, he experienced a sensation of guilt as if Karanoff had read his mind and might be waiting to deal with him for interference in his designs. He reflected that it would not be pleasant to face the personality that was Karanoff as an enemy, and he was amused to feel actual relief when Karanoff said, after a first swift glance of recognition,

"What do you think of these dances, Field? As a physician?"

"Pathologically? Well . . . I don't know . . . just what do you mean? . . ." It would be interesting to hear Karanoff state his thought exactly.

"What's their effect, for instance, in—say—childbirth?"

So it was marriage. Clara was right and Karanoff was acting on his desire to choose a wife as he would choose a horse, for beauty, health and good temper! He needed only to be assured of the health evidently.

Field said, also studying the pattern of the rug. "If the pelvis is abnormal these dances can't do any good, but given a normal pelvis they ought to be of incalculable help. Fact is they have already worked more of a reform in women's clothes than we realize. They're part of the whole movement toward freedom, and freedom of the body is of course highly desirable. The next generation ought to give evidence of some benefit."

"I thought it was the sports that were reforming women's clothes."

"We've always had certain of the sports. Riding, for instance, and in spite of the danger of long skirts and whalebone to a horsewoman, they held fashionable till lately, didn't they?"

Karanoff made no answer and Field went on, talking, of dancing he had seen in Vienna and the claims made for its virtues, and while he rambled, more aware of his companion's face and manner than of his own words, the young dancer came downstairs dressed, evidently for her dawn dance, for she wore the tattered blue of mist Clara had described, with its frosted berries. Carelessly, so that one end trailed, she carried a scarf, rose of aurora, silvered with dying stars, and save for these two veils of gauze the nymph—or so it seemed—was naked, yet she moved with an unselfconsciousness that was neither the innocence of childishness nor the crust of sophistication. It sprang rather, Field thought, from security in her own beauty.

Had she thought herself uncomely she would have worn the cloak of modesty, but aware of the perfection of the design in which she was molded, moving with effortless motion that was like water running over rippled sand—lissom as light—she knew herself to be a thing created to be seen. Art, Field thought, and in his own mind mimicked her probable pronunciation of the word, was everything and she was its devotee.

She had descended into brilliant light that streamed from the ball room and she had not seen the two men who watched her silently from the shadow farther down near the study door. As she waited for the orchestra, smiling faintly at Mrs. Withington's excited mediations between herself and the conductor, Field noticed the movement with which her head turned, the line of her upper lip that gave a hint of repression under its petal curve and the incredible contrast of dark and light pigment. In one little face the magnolia white and pink of skin were offset by eyes and brows and hair so dark, by lips so vivid that, for a moment, the miracle of creation held Field's thought.

The girl was beautiful and unusual as Clara had said, even, he remembered smiling, well nourished as her nudity gave evidence, and he wondered whether she actually was an instrument for the breaking down of old modesties that would cost the race in purity, or a pioneer in a new modesty that was to spring from frankness. He was himself of the old school in his ideas on such things, but there was something to be said for the new, though she who said it aloud in the Middle West as this girl was saying it, was more courageous than discreet.

He was thankful, as he regarded her soft contours, that he was not in love with her. Nothing short of immediate possession could save a man's peace of mind if once he loved her, and love, marriage, possession of any sort was not for him in his impecuniousness. He looked at Karanoff who stood motionless, his eyes on the girl, and

Karanoff catching his glance said, under cover of the orchestra, "I suppose Duncan would claim that her dances are responsible for that. . . ."

Field nodded, smiling drily at the probability but presumptuousness of such a claim.

"Would you expect a course of her dancing to make beauty such as that? Is that one of its messianic promises?"

"Absolutely not," said Field answering literally. "You can't make curves out of angles. They might help, though."

Karanoff moved nearer him, his eyes still on the dancer in a look Field took occasion to resent on her account. He wanted to take off his coat and wrap it around her and, when Karanoff said, "What is it that gives a girl of that size strength?" he answered briefly, "Fibre. Elastic muscle. I'd pit her fibre against your bulk for endurance."

"I see." And after a pause, "Where does she keep her bones? There's not an angle anywhere, not even in her elbow—or her knee."

"Adipose tissue."

"Adipose tissue! That language of yours . . . When you make love to a pretty girl do you say, 'My dear, your adipose tissue is exquisite'?"

Field smiled as if the question did not interest him. "I don't make love to them," he said briefly.

XII

IT was on the second Saturday of November that the first snow of the winter arrived on the wings of a sweeping gale. It swooped down on the Great Lakes region from the Dakotas with a ferocity that was presaged during the morning by clouds that sped on the wind low over the tree tops. There was an hour of gray quiet be-

fore the shriek of the storm and the fine driving snow were released, but from then until evening there was no pause in the blizzard.

All the lingering graces of October that had survived the blighting chill of November rains were wiped out on that first day of winter. The oaks that had retained some of their bright brown leaves were stripped and twisted before the robe of ermine was laid over their gray nakedness, and the red berries that had clung to the leafless twigs of the barberry bushes were destroyed by the vandal wind.

Battling her way home through the blinding beat of the storm that evening, Terry arrived in her room wet and breathless. Usually an encounter with the raging elements was not without its exhilaration; she liked it and met its buffetings with vigor and a thrill of response, but tonight she plowed her way home heavily and fled into the shelter of the house with relief.

It was good to have the refuge of her own dear room. The lighted lamp was like a friendly face inviting her to the solace of the round table, with its cretonne cover, its books and magazines. The whole room was satisfactory to Terry; the white woodwork outlining the sunny yellow of the walls, the ruffled curtains, and she delighted even in the green burlap screen that, for contrast, stood before the closet door. Like a woman whose innate good taste and grace of bearing give her simplest clothes a style that is a thing above the price of purchase, so the room seemed to Terry to have a charm of personality that made it lovable and livable.

This Saturday evening as she leaned against the wall above the register and shook her wet hat in the heat, she loved her room more than she ever had before. Her glance traveled slowly with a deliberate scrutiny that saw every touch that made the enclosure dear to her. There was the little bedside table with the primly ticking clock, the arresting photograph of Mabel in a silver frame and

the book she had read until late into the night. There was the warm scent of perfume that hung about her dresser like incense above an altar, and dearest of all was the tiny corner bracket from an ancient day that held a blue jug filled with tawny button chrysanthemums from the Karanoff hothouses. Not once had the little jug been empty since Terry's first happy night in White Falls, for Mr. Karanoff, though he had never glimpsed the room, knew of the blue jug against the yellow wall and kept it supplied with the flaming autumn flowers Terry loved.

She leaned there shaking her hat and gazing as on a dead face, for there had come to her that day the knowledge that this perhaps was to be her last Saturday in White Falls.

Mechanically she put her dry hat on the closet shelf and hung up her coat, then stepping from the closet she glanced into her mirror, but the face she saw there was so blankly white that she turned away from it and walked irresolutely toward her bed, where suddenly she threw herself face down on the white cover and circled her head with her arms.

Like the storm that had hung in gray silence, her grief broke in tears and the racking pulsation of tightened nerves. All that she might have said that afternoon rushed into her mind in passionate words that shaped themselves on her lips with such force that she sat up on the edge of her bed, her skirt twisted around her, and whispered through her tears.

The whole dreadful scene in which she had been centered was reset for her and she lived its ugliness again, its cruelty and sickening suggestion.

Of all the week the busiest time for her was Saturday afternoon when there were three large classes of children with no interval of rest between. In fact, the intervals were the most wearing of the afternoon for the incoming and outgoing children mingled in a milling crowd that poured around her, mauling her, loving her, questioning

and explaining, until she was so exhausted that only her love of the children and her interest in her own success kept her up.

It was after the last class in rhythm, when the children who wished were invited to stay for an hour of ball room dancing, that Terry, drawing the first free breath of the afternoon, turned her back on the waltzing babies in their ruffles and rosy cleanliness and moved toward her little office. Just for a moment she would close her door and rest, tired but happy in her popularity with the children, and it was then she perceived that the group of mothers who stood in the hall was composed entirely of her patronesses. Something in their faces arrested her attention and she realized with a flash that none of their children had appeared that day in any of her many classes. Mrs. Withington, her back against the wall, her face giving evidence of cold excitement, was talking while the others listened, but as she caught Terry's eye and saw her hesitation she stopped abruptly, staring at Terry while several women moved away murmuring commonplaces in a way that on the stage would have been condemned as over acting. Terry's eyes swept the circle again but when her questioning look drew no response she felt the blood drop slowly and painfully from her face, and with a blind impulse she turned to the chairman. "Mrs. Withington, please. What has happened?"

Mrs. Withington moved backward to Terry's little office. "Girls! Evelyn! Grace! Come in here," she called peremptorily. "We may as well have this out with Miss Parnell at once."

As the reluctant committee entered the little room, Terry, who waited for them to precede her, observed that they had hardly recovered their poise but that Mrs. Withington was very evidently steeled for an unpleasant scene which she opened without hesitation after she had shut the door with a sharp click of the latch.

The room was very still as she said, crisply, "Terry,

Mrs. Cobb and Mrs. McQueen and Mrs. Rich have withdrawn their children from your classes. A great many others intend to do so. I suppose you know why."

"No, Mrs. Withington, I don't know why."

"Have you noticed a falling off of your classes this week?"

Terry bowed her head in an effort to think. "Yes," she said looking up. "I believe I have, but I hadn't felt any concern about it. I supposed it was the rainy weather. This is a mystery, Mrs. Withington. Please explain."

Mrs. Withington walked to the window and sat on the sill. "I can hardly believe that you don't know. It is not easy to tell a girl these things. . . . It would be impossible to tell you how sick, how disgusted we are about it. We wanted you to come to White Falls; we were enthusiastic. We have stood behind you from the first and until today we have agreed to fight for your good name. But you have gone too far. We are done."

"Please . . ." came through Terry's white lips. She put her hand to her throat.

"It's Mr. Karanoff, of course," Mrs. Withington said quickly. "From the moment you entered his dining room more than a month ago, worse and worse, you have been gossiped about. The people of White Falls are not small-minded but you have given them ample reason for their suspicion. The Bollingers have talked, innocently enough. They meant no harm but they have kept the thing going even after we, as a committee, tried to stop it. They have told about the things he has sent you, the flowers, the books, the baskets of fruit. They have told how he takes you away in his car and keeps you out until late. He has furnished you riding horses. He has sent his car here to take you home on rainy days, and now the final offence, which cannot be overlooked, was your trip with him on his yacht. The captain was not so discreet as Mr. Karanoff probably thinks he was, or, what is worse, the cap-

tain knows Mr. Karanoff doesn't care that—" she snapped her fingers—"what is said. Unfortunately for you, Mr. Karanoff has no reputation to lose. What is said of him here in this town doesn't bother him in the least. I told you about him before you came. I told you he would take anything he could get, that he was unprincipled." She paused, but added, "I am very, very sorry indeed that he was able to get you."

Again the room was very still, while Terry stood speechless, gazing at Mrs. Withington as if she beheld her in the very act of throwing pitch into the garden of her romance.

"I think you ought to say something, Miss Parnell." It was Mrs. Rich. She moved nearer Terry and put her hand on her shoulder. "You certainly can't be as surprised as you look. You must have known you were taking this risk. The talk is horrid, you know, and we can't send our daughters to you under the circumstances. You see that?"

"Yes." The word came in a faint whisper.

"What are we going to do, Terry?"

"Mrs. Withington, Mrs. Rich . . ." She cleared her throat but the words were hardly audible. Mrs. McQueen abruptly left the room and Terry felt that she had been deserted by one on whom she would have counted for kindness, but immediately Mrs. McQueen returned with a glass of water for her and Terry drank it, lifting grateful eyes before she continued. "You have already judged me. You . . . you do not ask me what I have done. I have done nothing, but you are so sure. Why has no one told me before?"

"I think we should have, Terry," Mrs. McQueen said. "The rumors have been vague until now. We wouldn't believe them at first. We hoped against hope and we knew that if you were the wrong sort our warnings would do no good. It was the yacht story that brought all this to a head, but we do want to hear your defense. What have you to say?"

"Nothing."

Sitting on the side of her bed, the tears dropping from her cheeks Terry repeated the word. "Nothing," she said, "Nothing! I had nothing to say. Not a word. How I wish, oh how I wish I had walked out of the room right then. I stood there and looked at them. I couldn't have talked if they had put a hot iron on me." She covered her face, pressing her finger tips into her forehead until it ached, pressing her palms hard on her jaw bones until the blood throbbed in hurting protest against the violence that was a necessary antidote to her stormy grief, for she was angry at last, not only with the women who had seen fit to misjudge her, but with Nicolai Karanoff for his irregularities that reacted now in hurt to her.

A quick knock on her door was followed by a cautious turning of the knob and Clara MacRae's eyes peered inquiringly into the room. With a sob that was a cry of welcome Terry ran to her. She saw Clara's recognition of the havoc in her face as she stepped in quickly and closed the door, yet when Terry faced her, faced sympathy and inquiry, she could not make a beginning and as she struggled for composure Clara took one of her hands, rubbed it briskly and, to give Terry time, talked about herself.

"I was dismissed from my case tonight," she said. "I have just arrived after two long weeks away. Did you realize I'd been gone so long? I have been thinking all day what a lovely evening we would have together with the snow piling up outside and the lamp light warm and cozy inside. I hoped you'd read to me. I brought home a box of the most delicious little Danish cakes that my patient's cook made for me. We can have hot chocolate in my chafing dish and just be comfy in our bath robes. Poor little Terry, tell me what has happened."

Standing before her, the swimming blue of her eyes raised to Clara's grave face, Terry gave her the story in

detail. "I told them I had nothing to say. I said 'Nothing' and I stopped there and couldn't talk. They went away, all of them, and left me, and I had to go into the studio and dance with little boys until time for them to go home."

"Why did you do that? Why didn't you defend yourself? You should have explained it all. They are your patronesses." There was an edge of doubt in Clara's voice. She was asking, not with indignation for the methods of the inquisitors, but with direct interrogation.

"If Mrs. Withington had come to me alone, quietly, I could have explained. They surprised me on my busiest day. I could hear the music; I knew I was needed . . . Could I stand up and say, 'I am good. I have done no wrong. You misjudge Mr. Karanoff.' Can women announce that they are virtuous the way they announce their engagements?"

There was no cozy reading aloud that evening over hot chocolate and cakes. Terry tried to eat her supper but left the table with a murmured excuse before the meal was well started. The smell of the fried potatoes and the limp cold pork, the cheerful sound of Clara's voice talking to cover her own silence and yet accompanied by a glance now and then that said, "You are on trial and I'll stand by you till you're proven guilty, but don't forget that I warned you immediately after the Karanoff ball. . . . I told you exactly the sort of thing Karanoff stood for." Clara was thinking that and trying not to think it; she was meaning to be kind while she accepted the fact of Karanoff's questionable intentions yet doubted Terry's innocence. Why was it that a woman as good as Clara couldn't doubt the wrong and take the right for granted?

In her room she walked about wildly, sick with despair. She opened a window and inhaled the soft damp air. The storm had abated somewhat; it was not so cold and the wind had gone down. Tears filled her eyes again and she covered her face with her hands, crying silently,

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" as if she didn't know the answer to those nagging words. She knew what she must do, but because nothing life could demand of her just then was more difficult of execution, she would not admit it even to herself. Her mind went back to the last night in Chicago when Gus had given her his advice, advice that had made success for him and for Mabel; wisdom that most girls had to gather for themselves through long years of irremediable error. This that had been served to her today was failure. This was what Gus had meant when he said, "If you fail you'll have disappointed your mother, broken your aunt's heart, and shaken my faith. Back of failure is sin or stupidity. Don't be a Meant Well, that pest of pests, a Meant Well!" The scorn in Gus's voice, and Mabel's warning against Karanoff—"Yes, anything can happen, awful things, and your sense of freedom may be the worst possible thing for you." They had meant just such things as this.

Following an instinct she went to her closet, buckled her boots over her light slippers, put on her coat and pulled a tam-o'shanter down on her hair. To stay in her room meant further discussion with Clara and until she could think her way out of her trouble she must be alone.

XIII

THE snow was light and powdery. Soft flakes fell on her face and melted there unheeded. They hung on her lashes and mingled with the tears that started afresh. She saw the street lights through mist.

Everywhere behind the curtained windows of the houses, glowing lamplight suggested the warm relaxations of the evening. Families were gathered about reading lights, the sound of a phonograph reached her as she went silently through the snow; a dog barked, standing on the porch of his master's house; the streets were de-

serted and she saw into lighted dining rooms where people were eating. In one a baby beat his high chair tray with a spoon and in another a well-dressed woman picked a bone, her elbows on the table. "Lamb chops," Terry said and turned her face away.

She went up Caulkins Avenue. It was not far to the south boundary of Karanoff Park where she saw the dense darkness of the woods and, high on the hill that rose between her and the lake, the white pile of The Towers. The house was not brightly lighted, for Mr. Karanoff had been away all this week in Washington. He had left the day after their yacht trip, that strange, wild, wonderful trip, and she, a metropolitan free lance in the social world, had been as oblivious of the gossip about that trip as she was of the music of the spheres.

She had never in her brief life met Gossip in malicious mood. Gossip! This was the sort of thing it did; it made mothers afraid to trust their little children to her care, made women cruel as those four, whom she had thought her friends, had been cruel today. "You know we can't send our daughters to you," Mrs. Rich had said. Their daughters! Their children! They had known Mr. Karanoff took her driving in the evening, but nobody had gossiped as to where they went evidently. Nobody had found it sufficiently interesting to tell that they had gone way out across the bridge to the Bigelow house where little Jean lay sick.

Terry had thought Jean her most promising pupil, a very fairy of a child whose every move was grace, but after her first few lessons she had been reported ill and it seemed now that the doctors feared tuberculosis.

Karanoff had driven her out there with armfuls of flowers and fresh vegetables from his hothouses, fruit and toys. Mr. Karanoff had been nice about it. He didn't care for Jean particularly, but he had been willing to go because Terry wished it.

She reached the path through the park that led to the

lake. She knew it by the little sign posts along the way that were capped with snow tonight; they were almost covered, but they guided her through the trees till she saw the lake lying still and dark in the chalice of the snow clad hills. Pushing wearily toward a log that lay in the woods near the shore, she turned it over, after much tugging, and sat down.

It was not dark, the snow made the night seem light, and the electric lantern in the porte-cochère of The Towers threw a path down the hillside.

The *Russia* was gone from her moorings, put up for the winter, Terry knew, for she had heard Karanoff talking to the captain about it that day. That day.

It was a beautiful late autumn day, the last before the cold rains began. Karanoff had telephoned her and asked her to get into her warmest clothes and have a ride with him on the lake. He would pick her up at the studio at three o'clock and return her safely before her dinner hour, he said.

Terry had been delighted. They drove to The Towers first and Karanoff left her in the car while he went in for extra wraps. He returned wearing a fur lined coat of Melton cloth and over his arm he carried another coat that was a silky mass of dark fur.

They went aboard the *Russia* immediately. It had been so thrillingly wonderful to stand on the bridge between Captain Dakeman and Mr. Karanoff; to feel the wind against her face and see the shore all gorgeous with color in the late afternoon sun while the yacht cut through the choppy water. She had been warm, wrapped in the huge fur coat that was so long it lay on the bridge around her feet. She had not fastened it at the neck but had loved the sting of the wind and spray on her cheeks. Observing this, Mr. Karanoff had stepped in front of her and buttoned it, rolling the collar high about her head. Doubtless the captain, in telling that, had made the most of it.

"If you're a sport," Karanoff had said, "we can go out into Lake Michigan before dark and have our dinner here on the yacht on the trip back. What do you say?"

"I say let's!" Terry had cried delightedly. "I'd love it!"

And she had loved it supremely, every moment of it until in Lake Michigan where the huge waves broke over the lower deck something had gone wrong with the engine. Karanoff had sworn at the captain; he had been ugly and profane. Grasping Terry's arm he hurried her into the cabin and left her, with a muttered expletive.

She was there an hour alone while the yacht pitched in the sea. There was no throb from the engines. Only the slap of the waves, the creaking, and the beat of something loose, like a rope-end tapping the wall, broke the stillness. Once she heard a rapping as if someone was hammering on metal. She could see nothing through the port holes except the wash of dark water and though she was not afraid, she was very dizzy. She put a cushion from one of the chairs on the floor in a corner and crouched there, her hands over her face, her body braced against the wall.

At last she felt the throb of the engine through the beat of water upon the decks, but hardly had it settled to a steady pulse until it stopped and the silence endured for a long, tense moment before it began again, this time with the accompaniment of bells that spoke sharply above a burst of voices. As she felt the vessel moving forward with a steadying force from within, the door opened and Karanoff, wet and breathless, a smudge of black across his chin, stepped into the room. He did not see her at first and he looked about in alarm before she spoke, rising.

"Stay where you are," he said, and disappeared through a door that was instantly slammed after him by the ship's motion, but she could hear the staccato of his voice as he gave several orders.

A moment later through another door a servant entered

and began setting the table for dinner. Terry ventured from her corner and tried to imitate the easy movements of the man, who seemed not the least put out by the ship's motion. She talked to him a little and he told her they would soon be in quieter water.

It was true. By the time Karanoff returned dinner was ready and the yacht was riding easily through the still waters of the canal.

"Go in my bath room there and make your toilet," he said holding the bedroom door open. "You're pale. Stir you up?"

"A little, not badly. Is this your room? How beautiful. How unusual." She looked about.

"Help yourself." He closed the door between them.

She had thought he need not be so abrupt about it. She wanted to be shown the room and have it explained. It was different from any room she had ever seen. With a swift glance toward the closed door she put her hand lightly on one of the pillows. The bed was covered with blue silk, gold encrusted, and in the center was a gold embroidered N framed in a wreath. On the foot of the bed he had left a crumpled shirt, and a necktie hung out of a chiffonier drawer that was open several inches.

That moment was memorable, for it had revealed to her the change in herself since the night of his dinner. Dressing that evening, she had pretended that he would want to adopt her that she might play, carefree, with such youths as Sam Caulkins—Sam Caulkins, whom she had found was just a little boy grown large in stature—a big child who would need years of self-denial and fear and effort before he could reach her own maturity. She had struggled and hungered in her life, enough to give her understanding of Karanoff's grim moods; she loved that grimness, she loved to be with a man who in every way knew more than she and whose word gave her a sense of finality and rightness. Karanoff gave her that, and yet she feared him, feared displeasing him, feared to mis-

interpret his silences, his sharp retorts and two-edged humors.

Thought of his humors recalled her to realization of the fact that she was keeping him waiting when he was hungry. She moved toward the mirror, but paused on impulse and seizing the rumpled shirt squeezed it hard in both her arms, then darted happily into the bath room where she hurried about her toilet.

There was little she could do without change of clothing to make herself more fit for dining with a king. Her hair had kinship with wild weather and looked its best, she thought, when wind and rain had tossed and curled it, but after soap and water had renewed her magnolia freshness she coaxed two locks of hair into prim ringlets that she patted against her cheeks, and borrowing Karanoff's toilet water, dabbed its stinging fragrance on her lips.

When she returned to the cabin Karanoff was standing, one hand on her chair, at the table waiting for her, and as she closed the door she paused, sharply arrested by the look he turned on her. Instantly she thought that he had seen her when she had embraced his shirt and she smiled with dancing merriment in her eyes, wishing that he would take the cue and laugh in quick and complete understanding with her. She wanted to seize his hands as she had the shirt and dance out the joy that was in her, but that look. . . . It was not a question, yet when he spoke it was with a question that he began.

Extending a hand toward her he came close to her and looked down into her face where the laughter gave way to understanding of his mood. His open palm waited and after a moment of hesitation she put her hand in it, slowly, drawn by his eyes.

"Terry . . ." His fingers closed over hers in a quick pressure. He put his other hand under her chin. "What is it I read in your eyes?"

She had not replied. Before she could gather her wits, while the blood mounted slowly in her face, the door

opened quickly and the servant, carrying a tureen of soup, walked into the room.

Karanoff turned on his heel and said something in French to the man whom he called Jules and there was a strained silence as Terry moved to her place at the table. Karanoff put her in her chair; Jules set her soup before her, passed wafers, then celery, and left them.

Terry could not look up. She knew what Karanoff might have read in her eyes at any time and she could not meet the insistent gaze she felt was on her. She began to talk about the accident, the huge waves, the beauty of the shore and woods, anything at all, and between sentences she took little sips of soup from her spoon. At first Karanoff gave her no response, but later he talked as the servant came and went, and once she saw by his smile that he was amused at her discomfort.

After dinner his good humor was eclipsed by the constant presence of others in the cabin. Jules cleared the table and set the room to rights; Captain Dakeman came in, talked rapidly about the repairs to the boiler and went out but returned almost at once with a blue print and the two men studied it for some minutes.

While they talked Terry went to a narrow bookcase cleverly built in between two doors, and selected, without noticing the title, a red bound book that she opened with a convincing show of interest and settled herself under a drop light to read. The volume proved to be an old copy of *Trilby,* which she had not read but of which she had heard enough to know that fascination to the point of hypnotism was the theme, and though her eyes were on the first page she hardly saw the words but fell to brooding upon the mystery of fascination, for, with the coming of the word to her mind, extraneously, she had understood that fascination was not the least of Karanoff's charm for her. She feared him at times, but he held her; she was disappointed constantly in his want of humor, but every hour she spent with him increased her

interest in him and her hunger for his nearness, for always, when it was over, she knew that her fear had been groundless. He was abrupt, outspoken, but never offensive in a way that she could resent, and she constantly blamed herself for anticipating the unpleasant. When he talked he was worth hearing; when silence was his mood, he seemed interested in anything she chose to say, and withal he gave her warmth, strength; he quickened and challenged her and without him she was conscious of her incompleteness.

She wondered if there were women who might so enthrall her and she decided that there were. Mabel had the gift of fascination. Terry had never admitted it, but she did fear Mabel. Mabel challenged and compelled her so that she felt impelled to obey even though her own will cried for release, yet she loved Mabel as her nearest and dearest not excepting even her mother.

So intent was she in her thought and her resolve to cease her foolish fears of Karanoff, that she did not know Captain Dakeman had left until Karanoff stood by her chair looking down on her in silent, unsmiling inquiry.

"I found a novel," she said, starting, "*Trilby*. I suppose you read it long ago."

Karanoff tossed a fresh cigarette to a tray and took a cigar from his pocket. "I never read novels," he said briefly.

Terry rose, the book against her hip. "You never do? . . ." Her voice was politely incredulous. "You never read novels?"

"Never."

"Then that explains you . . ."

"How so?"

"It explains . . ." She was thinking that it explained his self-importance and his inability to see humor in just anything. "You never see yourself as others see you if you don't read novels," she said, and was about to amend the hint of criticism by observing that he went to the

theater which perhaps served the same end, when she saw, by the light of the match held to his cigar, the expression that was fixed on her.

He was not giving the slightest attention to her words. He was looking at her with half-veiled, probing eyes in which there was a gleam, a leaping minatory light that made her move backward from him in a return of the fear she had just put from her with resolution, and this time, evidently, she had reason for her alarm for he reached quickly, catching her about the waist and drew her close to him.

"Please," she whispered, "oh, please . . ." and despised herself for her terror. She tried to push him away, but he held her closer and then suddenly, when she had closed her eyes and his breath was on her cheek, he had released her.

Jules was in the room again. He held a bowl of fruit high in both hands and set it exactly in the center of the table. He meticulously straightened a chair while Terry stood trembling with anger at herself, realizing that Karanoff had said several words in the instant that he had held her—words that might have altered the complexion of the act, had she not been too deafened by panic to hear him.

When Jules was gone she saw that Karanoff was holding her coat for her. His face was dark with temper and he said roughly, "We'll go on deck."

Silence had shut down on him as night had closed over the water, and relief had come to Terry as always after one of her frenzied moments. They found a sheltered place in the stern and there Karanoff smoked while Terry talked and the lake fell away in darkness. Ahead they knew were the lights of White Falls and separation for them, but Karanoff's ill temper kept him from her in sullen silence, for which she felt herself to blame. Regardless of the peculiar panic he inspired at times she wanted to love him and to be loved by him; there was no

doubt whatever about that in her own mind, for she was certain that if once he loved her she would cease to fear him. It was perhaps a doubt of her lingering in his mind that was chilling her.

And that was all; that was the record of their weeks together. Karanoff had gone to Washington the day after the yacht trip and she had heard nothing from him directly. She had received flowers; the car had been sent for her . . . Save for that one moment when Jules had come in with the fruit there was nothing whatsoever that the whole town of White Falls might not have seen and heard. True they had talked of themselves a great deal—Terry frankly with no desire to hide her youthful hardships from him, he of his strange childhood, his school life in England, his successes.

Yet even though that was all, she could not prove it, nor did anyone ask her to prove it. Her only possible chance for success in earning her living lay in bending her will to her patronesses. She must thank them instead of rebelling against their judgment; she must explain that she had not realized what gossip could do, give them a straight, loyal account of Karanoff's ways with her, defend herself but—break with him. Whatever her patronesses said was right—that she would make herself do, and yet the cost to her . . . for she wanted Karanoff's attention more than she wanted anything else in the world, save *not* to fail.

XIV

IN Dr. Field's office above the Standard Drug Company's Main Street store, Clara was making vehement defense of Terry.

It was Dr. Field's evening office hour and as usual he was idle, impatient in every nerve, and ready to welcome

any visitor who might help him to keep his thoughts off himself.

For almost an hour he had been lying back in his swivel chair, his hands behind his head, his legs crossed, while Clara had analyzed and defended the young dancer in her affair with Nicolai Karanoff. That she was as pagan as an idol, yet as star-clear in her innocence as a child, disciplined, patient even, in her disappointments, and very fertile soil in which Clara meant to sow the seeds of her own religion and ideals, Field gathered from the vehemence of her friend. He suspected that Clara was convincing herself along with him, for she finished her arraignment of Mrs. Withington's methods with a bit of bravado—"I told Pearl Withington that this action on her part was going to bring Nicolai Karanoff to the point of declaring his intentions and that I rather thought she might expect to hear of Terry's engagement to Nicolai along about Monday. She gasped, and I shook in my boots. It was a bold stroke on my part, but if Nicolai doesn't do what I think he is going to do after I tell him about this thing, then you'll have to be engaged to her."

"I?" Field's surprise and alarm broke Clara's vehemence and she laughed.

"Yes. You. We could announce an engagement with an agreement that it would be broken after Terry had lived down these yarns. Wouldn't you rather enjoy being engaged to her for a while? Tell the truth."

Field had risen, and was walking about, his hands in his pockets, a smile tugging at the corners of his lips. He jingled some coins significantly. "Not at the price," he said. "Can't afford her."

"You wouldn't have to afford her. It would be merely a form that obligated neither of you, and yet I think you would gain by it, for she would be generous in her gratitude."

"You do believe in her, and incidentally you must believe in me—in my imperviousness to her charm. No.

When that sort of girl appears on the horizon I have only one thought and that is to keep my eyes closed when she's around."

Clara stared at him and he met her eyes gravely. She, he supposed, could not understand how he could be with her and Lyda Wayne without involving himself, yet dreaded even to know Terry Parnell, and he wondered if, given the hint, she could begin to realize how different from her own was the little actress's appeal.

He turned his back after the long look that Clara received in silence and walked about aimlessly while she telephoned The Towers and gave a message to Carter for Mr. Karanoff.

"Fortunately he arrives tomorrow morning and, since it is Sunday, he probably will see me," she said quietly. She was pulling on her gloves; she had taken her bag. Field saw that she was sensing mystery in him, for her vehemence and her humor had given place to a reserve that disturbed him. What was she thinking? He wished he had held his tongue on the subject of the young dancer.

Clara said at the door, with unaccustomed diffidence and reproach in her manner, "If after all I have said, you, too, doubt her, I have a real fight on my hands. It is well that here is a chance for understanding in Mr. Karanoff. He knows the truth, whatever he chooses to do about it."

She had misunderstood, and he thanked his stars for the mistake. She would not tell Terry, and since no one else cared except himself he could soon, tomorrow even, telephone her and give her evidence of his contrition for an ill-considered expression of doubt.

He moved to one of his front windows and stood looking into the snow-buried street, hearing the faint thud of Clara's rubbered heels as she went down the long hall to the stairs; remembering Terry as she had looked that night at The Towers in her tattered wisp of dawn, the silvered rose of her scarf dropping from one hand; and he thanked the ascetic God of his mother, the ascetic God

of Clara that the enchanting perfume of the dark flower was not in his nostrils. He had heard the gossip about Terry from the first, but he had no reason for doubting her. There had been a night in October, mild as the smell of wood smoke from the chimneys, when he had been one of a sailing party in Sam Caulkins's sloop where she, in a tam-o'-shanter, a sweater, and small stout oxfords, had lain face down on the seat, bailing with an old tin can. Tattered clouds like the mist-blue of her dawn dance garments, had floated softly over an autumn moon and he had yielded to the delight of the night and of watching her. With the bowl of his pipe cradled in his palm, the smoke a screen before his eyes, he had observed every graceful motion of her energetic helpfulness, her spontaneous happiness. Later, in Sam Caulkins's boat house, where they had danced and drunk cider with a biting edge, he had looked straight into her lifted eyes and had known that doubt of her would be the sheer poison of a perverted mind. Yet tonight he had let Clara go out believing that he doubted her. Not that his opinion mattered to either of them, and Clara would not tell, but he was sorry, and wished he had not yielded to that impulse for self-protection.

While he was seeing her in warm-tinted nudity, remembering the muted gaiety of manner that matched her smile—frank, sweet on her lips, but touched with something of trouble in her lovely eyes—, Terry was shaking with cold and dampness, with hunger and weariness, disconsolate, disappointed, before Clara's darkened door.

She had expected to find Clara waiting for her beside a table whereon steaming chocolate and the little Danish cakes would invite her to confession of her surrender. She had counted on Clara's advice and encouragement in carrying out her resolution, for she was never certain of her own decisions.

Through all her life she had been told that there would

be independence some time, for her, but she had lived to learn that it was financial independence, not independence of spirit her mother had meant when she had made the promise. She had never been permitted to develop self-reliance nor to exercise her judgment unaided by her mother's nagging, and now, when she had reacted, in a moment of shock, with resistance to insult she was terrified at her temerity. It was defying the source of her very bread for her to meet the criticism of her patronesses with silence even though that silence was the most intense expression of her injured virtue.

She was willing to eat at once of the humble pie she had refused in the afternoon, and yet she was not ready to follow her own sense of right without first consulting Clara, who had, in its very essence, the independence of spirit and faith in her own judgment that Terry lacked.

As she hesitated at the head of the stairs, uncertain whether to go to Mrs. Withington at once or wait for Clara, she was seized with an attack of chills that disposed of her doubt. She must get warm and dry first and she went, her teeth chattering, her whole body rigid with cold, into her room and turned on the bedside lamp. On her pillow was a note that she saw at once was from Clara.

Terry, you naughty girl, you shouldn't have gone out without telling me. You will take cold, tramping in the wet and snow on an empty stomach. If you come in before I do go to bed and I will see you later. I am going to tell Pearl Whitington what I think of her. Don't worry. I shall do everything I can to help you. C——

Accepting that as authority, Terry did go to bed under extra blankets and her coat, with the windows left closed until she should feel the warm blood coursing in her veins again. Hunger, weariness, the exhaustion of emotion and salty tears took toll of her like an illness and her thoughts began a feverish round in which the one important point was not to fail. To pack and leave White

Falls under a cloud, to admit defeat to the three who had sent her forth to success, was more than she could endure. She must not and would not fail.

She slept almost at once, rousing only when someone—Clara probably—flashed a light on the bed as if to be certain she was in it, and then quietly raised a window. And waking Sunday morning to the knowledge that she was not alone so long as Clara believed in her, she was able better to endure the pain that throbbed in her head. Whether it was illness, real illness, or only the after effects of great stress of feeling she did not know nor care; she wanted only to be certain that on this day she would set herself right. Why, she wondered, had the evil minds of While Falls supposed she wanted to misbehave? How stupid she must seem to be, to these people who misjudged. Nothing could be stupider than for a woman who was dependent upon the good will of conservative people to throw to the wild winds her reputation for moral integrity. And again she wondered what she—not any woman, but she, Terry—could be supposed to have gained by such behavior. In her life there had been certain theatrical women upon whom Mabel looked with contempt because they were public in their *amours,* because they lost more than they gained. Terry was not aware of failure in distinction there, that it was not so much a matter of right and wrong in their lives as of gain and loss, nor was she, like Harry Field, thankful that the enchanting perfume of the dark flower was not in her nostrils. She had no acquaintance with the dark flower; its perfume was unknown to her. Not passion but hunger for romance impelled her toward love. Love for love's sake, love of life, of beauty, of whatsoever things were lovely—on these she dwelt. Beyond the rim of their horizon lay the tangled morass of the unbeautiful, the unlovely, that she refused to focus her thought upon.

She lay in bed through the Sunday quiet and heard the cry of the locomotive that was bringing Nicolai Kar-

anoff into town again; she answered searching, practical questions from Clara, who was concerned for her health, but when Clara ordered her to stay in bed and refused to let her discuss her pressing problems until she had brought her a light breakfast and administered a white tablet that was to work magic, Terry knew with rebellion in every nerve that magic, for her, could be had only through relief from her sharp anxiety.

But she obeyed, because in Clara's manner there were mystery and command. Clara had taken charge and she hinted that greater miracles than Terry dreamed were to be worked for her. She had only to yield herself to her friend. While she was trying to eat, Clara was called to the telephone and from the occasional word that came to her she knew that she was talking to Dr. Field. "I'm glad you changed your mind," and "Sometime I'll tell Terry," she heard her say, but when Clara returned to the room she made no explanation. Then she was called again and after a brief conversation she put her head in the door to say—"Mr. Karanoff telephoned to ask me to go out with him in the Russian sleigh. He's coming at once."

Before she left, while Karanoff was outside waiting for her, she bent above Terry and put a kind hand on her head. "Promise me you won't move till I come back."

"I can't promise that, Clara. I must be busy on this business. I am going to Mrs. Withington as soon as I am dressed."

Clara sat down on the bed and took Terry's hands in her own. "You mustn't. You don't understand everything now, but please do wait just until I come back. If you don't wait you may spoil all my plans for you."

"But Clara . . ." Terry could not refrain from protest. "You treat me as if I were a child. I must know your plan. I must do something."

"Yes, of course, but not before the time is right. Please trust me a little longer. When I come back I can

explain. Get up and dress if you want to; make an appointment to see Mrs. Withington early this afternoon but don't do more than that."

Her face was so intent, her eyes so brimming with earnestness and affection that Terry yielded and gave her promise, but hardly had Clara reached the stairs until Terry was out of bed and peeking from the window. She saw the Russian sleigh, the Russian harness with its glittering silver and red pompons, and Nicolai Karanoff—his fur collar and fur robes, his fur driving gloves making a very Russian bear of him. The horses were restive and he gave them all his attention, hardly glancing at the house until Clara slammed the front door. Terry saw him receive her into the warmth of the rugs and tuck her in, saw him question her and glance up at her window so that she shrank back; and then with flying hoofs and snow, the flash of red, and the jingle of silver bells, they were off.

Even before dressing, so difficult was it for her to wait, she telephoned Mrs. Withington and made the appointment for the afternoon. "I must see you today," she began but was interrupted by Mrs. Withington's high voice, "Well, it will have to be this afternoon, Terry. I can't see you this morning, but I would if I could, you may be sure."

There was kindness in the voice that Terry knew she owed to Clara and she returned to dress and wait with a certain relief, for since neither Mrs. Withington nor Mr. Karanoff could see her at the moment, she could take no action.

She went about her room dusting with loving care the simple treasures that made the place home to her, and her thoughts were a strange mixture of self-condemnation, regret, loneliness. Mostly loneliness. She could not turn toward home for refuge. There was no refuge for her. The little disorderly flat in Chicago was theirs no longer; her mother and Mabel would be on the road until Christ-

mas and for Terry there was nothing beyond White Falls but the desolation of the jobless.

She had hoped to feel less acutely the precariousness of her plight when it was viewed in the morning light, but save for the possibility of winning respite from her patronesses she saw no chance for averting the calamity that was already upon her. She dared not count on Nicolai Karanoff to help her. His word as to her innocence had no weight whatever, and the one move he could make in her defense was so drastic that she could see no possible reason why he should make it. She would tell him he must never try to see her again, never send her even a flower of friendship and he would accept the ultimatum with a murmured "I'm sorry to have brought this on you, but doubtless you are right." She knew how he would look when he said it, his black, slightly bloodshot eyes masked, his lip lifted in a twist of amusement that would be a criticism of her.

A very short time, it seemed to her, after they had dashed away in a frosty cloud of snow they were back at the door, filling the air with silver music and giving the winter scene its one bit of movement and color. As Clara emerged from the robes Terry's face went white with anxiety. If Clara had spoken in her behalf and if Mr. Karanoff cared, he would come in now and ask to see her. If he drove away it would mean that he was not even going to murmur, "I am sorry, but doubtless you are right."

He drove away. Hardly had Clara descended into the snow than the horses were off, racing the wind. Terry fell back from the window and, though her eyes had blurred with the hurt of it, she tried to busy herself with the books on her table that Clara, who was rushing up to her, might not find her waiting, pale with suspense. Yet she knew, when Clara filled the doorway, radiant with cold and freshness, that she was not noticing her face nor manner. She did not see her hands on the books, but

closed the door, threw off her coat, wrapped her arms about Terry and rocked with joyous laughter.

"Terry, I have had the most marvelous time you can imagine! I have never enjoyed anything more than this ride! I made Nicolai Karanoff so miserable that for once he was silent with humility. Listen, Terry, look at me, he wants you to marry him; he's coming back here to tell you so. What are you going to say? Do you want to marry him? Are you going to do it?"

"Oh, don't ask me that!" Terry cried, drawing back from her. "How can I answer you?" She tried to hold the troubled frown about her eyes, but color, relief, were sweeping over her face and the frown that was but the shadow of a triangle between her brows was giving way before them.

"Well." Clara sat on the bed and Terry sank down, facing her as she talked; she pulled off her gloves, her hat, her rubbers with never a pause for breath. "You didn't know it, but last night I told Pearl Withington that I thought she would hear of your engagement to Nicolai not later than Monday morning; so I had to make good! It was just so up to me that I got into that sleigh feeling as if I had a pistol in my mind that was ugly enough to force Nicolai's hands up. He said, as if he were a dog barking at me, 'Well, you have something on your mind. Get it off. What have I done?' and I went right to work to tell him what he had done. I told him about yesterday and your trouble and the shock. I told him that you were going to ask him never to see you again and then that you probably would resign from your work here and go back to the stage, and I assure you I didn't spare any effort. I said, 'You have been lavishing attention on Terry ever since the first moment you met her. You yourself told of going down on the train with her, of inviting her to your dinner, of telegraphing and fussing to get her here on time. Then you received her with public expression of your admiration and from then on you

have done your best to make her unpleasantly conspicuous.' He didn't answer, just set his jaw and drove those wild animals of his. So I kept still and then he said, 'Go on!' So I went on. I said, 'Don't fail to understand this, Mr. Karanoff. If any other unmarried man in this town had paid Terry that attention we all would have been interested, and charmed by the romance of it, but because it was you with your past and your moral anarchy the thing is a scandal, and Terry has been well nigh destroyed by it. You know she is as innocent of wrong as I am where you are concerned, and I know it because I am close to her and understand her, but nobody else can believe good of her after that yacht story. I think it's up to you to make full reparation to Terry."

" 'What would you have me do?' he asked, grim as a piece of granite, and I said, 'I'd have you ask her to marry you and let it be known that you have asked her. If she refuses—and I think you are safe; I think she will refuse—you will be none the worse for it and she will be saved.'

" 'Why should you think she would refuse?' he asked and I could have cried with joy. I knew I was making him miserable! Oh, Terry, if you could have seen his face. I had to hide behind my muff to keep him from seeing how pleased I was at his hurt vanity. I said, 'Why shouldn't she refuse you? What have you to offer her except money? She can go back to the stage, now that she's found out how nasty our little world is; she can have admiration, success, pleasure, applause, all the *young* lovers she wants, and fame besides. You know she can. Why should she want to marry you?' "

Terry was drawing in a deep breath. "Clara! How could you say such things?"

"It was easy for me, Terry, because it's true. With all my heart and soul and mind I hate the sort of thing he stands for. He is a very branding iron and the mark of him is on you in a way I loathe. It did me good to

tell him. I have nothing to gain or lose by him and he knows it. Well, let me go on. He turned the horses around and slowed them down, then he said, 'Clara, once too often this town has grossly misjudged me. I want Terry to marry me; I have wanted her ever since I first met her; especially I have wanted her since that night at my house when she did that Pharaoh's daughter thing. If I had taken my own way about it I would have asked her then, but I knew I couldn't rush her into a decision like that; so I have waited. I have tried to do the conventional thing.'

"Really, Terry, I could hardly speak. *I was sorry for him!* After all my scolding I wanted to be nice, but I knew it wouldn't do and I said I was afraid he was too late. You see, I had to keep him miserable so that you could comfort him—if you wanted to. I said, 'You can't imagine what it means to a girl like Terry who is dependent on her good name to have a thing like this happen to her. I hope, for your sake, that she will want to marry you, but, frankly, I can't see why she should.' I told him I had left you sick in bed. He said he must see you this morning, bed or no bed; that I must be chaperone, but he wanted first to take the horses to the stable; they were steaming hot and he couldn't leave them standing while he was in here; so he's coming back any moment in his Packard. Now tell me. What are you going to do?"

Terry sat perfectly still, her lip caught between her teeth, her eyes lowered. Against the heightened color of her cheeks her black lashes quivered and a tear hung glistening before it was blinked away.

"I think . . ." she began slowly, "I suppose . . . that your idea of making him think I am uncertain is right, but I don't believe I can act that out . . . with him. He hasn't meant to hurt me, and I couldn't . . . want to . . . hurt him."

After a pause when Terry was feeling that Clara's si-

lence held disappointment for the failure of her little drama, Clara said with compassion in her voice. "Terry . . . You are actually in love with that man. You do want to marry him."

Terry raised her eyes and Clara looked into their revealing blue. That trouble and relief, tears and happiness, were mingled there, she knew, but something besides Clara must have seen; for the excitement, the amusement died from her expression as she leaned forward searching Terry's face.

"To think," she began slowly, "that in this day, Anno Domini, in this little world of White Falls, a girl as beautiful, as good, as dear as you, should feel *gratitude* to a man like Nicolai for marrying her!"

XV

THEY were married on Christmas Day at The Little Church Around the Corner and save for the bride —who disclaimed to qualify—and the groom, the wedding party included none but theatrical celebrities.

When she was consulted as to whom should be invited —"Just," Bessie explained, "to give the affair the festivity suitable to so happy a wedding"—Terry had said there was only one person she especially desired should be present and that one was Nicolai Karanoff. That she was expressing Nicolai's own preference she knew for he wanted nothing more than the briefest ceremony to make the contract legal. But Bessie, in her happiness and relief that Terry was disposing of all their problems—her profession, her support and her mother's future—by marrying the Russian, insisted on wedding garments, a little group of friends, and a wedding breakfast at the Waldorf-Astoria, for other hotels might rear their storied heights, spread the alluring chastity of their period rooms

and all-tile baths, she preferred the ormolu of the Waldorf as the scene of her only child's wedding feast.

The decision that they should be married in New York was inevitable, since Mabel and Bessie were at last back on Broadway; and that they should spend the first week of their honeymoon there was necessary, for even Nicolai could see that Terry must do a great deal of important shopping as a first preparation for her life with him.

"We'll have a suite at any hotel you choose and you can buy the town," he promised.

Terry had been held by Mrs. Withington to her classes until the Christmas assembly on the twenty-second, and thus bound to her work by a patroness who had become a most devoted friend following a Sunday afternoon in November when Terry had made quiet announcement of her engagement—and Nicolai's insistence that he could not wait till after Christmas, she was married in the only new frock she had time to buy on the morning of December twenty-fourth.

"One is all I need for the wedding," she explained simply to Nicolai, "for the next day I shall buy a dozen."

It seemed to Terry that Mabel, the one who loved her best, had done her utmost to wear her out before the event. Miss Spencer rebelled against that which, to her, was a sinful waste of beauty and talent. She wrote Terry long letters begging her to wake to realization of her mistake before it was too late, and even at the wedding breakfast Terry heard her tell Gus, who was very elegant in a morning coat with a white carnation in his buttonhole, that she blamed him for Terry's desertion of her own world and her professional inheritance.

As Gus realized the amazing nature of her accusation his wide face opened in a gasp of astonishment.

"Suffering cats!" he cried above the orchestra and the voices, "I'm to blame, am I? Well, did you ever! Then cheer up! Marriage isn't always final, my dear. Mar-

riages have been known to wax and wane and perish from the earth."

He was on Terry's right and Mabel was on his right; he drew aunt and niece together so that their picture hats almost met over his fruit coupé and said, addressing himself to Mabel, but wanting Terry to hear his unseemly joke, "If they're as misfit as you think, they'll get done before long and we'll have our Terry back in our midst plus a little experience, a little wisdom, and maybe a pret-ty lit-tle al-i-mo-ny. Hey?"

Terry was horrified and she glanced quickly at Nicolai to see if he had heard the sacrilege, but Nicolai was talking to Bessie, who listened hungrily, adoringly, to every word that fell from his lips.

In her mother Terry found an enthusiastic ally. Bessie was delighted that her daughter's bothersome career was to be settled in the old-fashioned way. She expected Terry to be supremely happy on the money she was marrying, and though her own life had been spent in the theater where young love is exalted, she nevertheless considered Karanoff a romantic and thrilling lover. To her he was young and Terry would be his match in worldly wisdom before a year of life with him. And when Mabel, seizing on any point for argument against the marriage, asked her if she had no sense of his moral unfitness, Bessie said, "Certainly not. That is life. Nothing matters if he will love Terry and care for her abundantly." Terry knew that to herself she added, "And love Terry's dependent mother and care for her."

That slant of her enthusiasm for the match both Mabel and Terry understood. They saw that on the wedding day her emotion barely grazed the borders of that thicket of tender sentiment, relief, and yearning that most mothers feel for their daughters. She was acutely conscious of Nicolai's money and she said again and again, making virtue of her frankness, that since his first youthful impulses were over nothing he was ever likely to do in the

future could be worse for Terry than the strain after success and the probable poverty she had escaped, for Bessie believed she knew her daughter better than Mabel did. "Mabel has the iron, the selfishness, that go to the making of great success," she said to Nicolai. "Terry hasn't. Terry has the talent and beauty and charm but not the stamina. My husband, Robert, always said to me, 'Darling, you would be one of the world's loveliest actresses if you had the stamina.' I did not have it, nor has Terry."

It seemed to Terry during that wedding celebration when she smiled mechanically, answered mechanically, and responded to Nicolai's murmured compliments, that the world could never be more beautiful nor more hurting than in that hour. All that the arts of a super-civilization could contribute to the loveliest of festivals was there in that gold and rose dining room for her. The women smiled at her with affection and sympathy; the men gave her faintly amused, wholly tender homage. Flowers, china, silver, flashing jewels—Nicolai's wedding-Christmas gifts to the guests and her—filled the place with light, while delicate food was set before her and carried away, hardly tasted, because the singing of violins brought tears into her throat.

Beloved, It Is Morn . . .

Oh, Promise Me . . .

Nicolai found her hand under the cloth and pressed it close. "You promised me," he reminded her, and her eyes said, "I remember . . ."

Two promises she had made him, and the two occasions when he had asked them were of the great events in her short life. That Sunday in the dreary Bollinger parlor when he had asked her to marry him was of her memories the most beautiful. Nicolai—despite his grimness, perhaps because of his grimness—had been of all lovers the most dear. He had been sorry, and no one would believe unless they knew, that Nicolai could be so beauti-

fully contrite about the trouble that had come to her through him. He had told her immediately that he wanted her to marry him and he had questioned her. Hadn't she known on the *Russia* what he wanted to say? But for that spying Jules he would have told her then that he loved her. The man had angered him, he said, had spoiled his mood, yet he should have known that harm might come to her from that. He wasn't experienced in asking girls to marry him; he was not used to thinking for the protection of anyone he loved, because for many years, as many years almost as she was old, he had loved nobody . . . nobody . . . and now he loved her with all the ardor of denial that has come to an end of its waiting.

Not with humor, not with tenderness, but with strength and sincerity that drew her like sunlight he had persuaded her not only to say at once that she would marry him, but to marry him without a moment of unnecessary delay.

"I'll take you to Mrs. Withington this afternoon and we'll announce our engagement. We'll turn Clara loose on it; we'll tell the papers in Washington and White Falls, in New York and Chicago, and these village gossips will see that the good name of Nicolai Karanoff's fiancée is not to be trifled with."

Yes, she had promised him, but it had seemed to her that the giving was all his, so frightened and hurt was she, and balanced so perilously on the very brink of dishonor.

He had taken her into the security of all the things that Clara despised as nothing when weighed against her beauty, her goodness, her dearness. . . . "You're giving him twenty years of youth," Clara reminded her, but Terry only thought, "He is giving me twenty years of experience."

Unlike some girls she loved the consciousness of his years and his experience. Beside her now at his own wedding table with its lace and orchids, its lilies and pink

rosebuds, his experience gave him poise, assurance. He could talk of prosaic things above the throbbing of the harp; he could dispose of a broiled sweetbread in three bites as if he were hungry as on any other day and enjoyed the food.

"Not eating, Terry?" he asked, as if he had read her look. "You ought to try," and he laughed at her, and put his warm hand over her cold one on the table, so that all the guests smiled too, and Terry gaily took a bite of mushroom to show them what a raving, starving appetite she really had.

But when the champagne began to make them merry and there were toasts, silly and witty, she was thinking of that other time when she had given him a further promise. Why he had made a point of asking it of her she did not know even yet. She did know, however, that there was that in Nicolai's experience which made it possible for him to speak sometimes without sensitiveness of things that would not have been in the least offensive had he approached them differently.

On that night when she and Nicolai had talked in the study while Mrs. Bollinger, whom Nicolai paid to chaperone Terry when she was at The Towers, sat stiff and important with her knitting before the hall fire, he had said, "I had a dream about you last night, Terry. It was a horrible thing and made me feel that I wanted to talk to you about something. What do you know about marriage? Sit here beside me and tell me what you know."

Said Terry, dropping down on the divan with one foot under her, "I know a very great deal about marriage, Niki, but what was the dream?"

"The dream can wait. What is the 'very great deal' that you know?"

She had smiled at his funniness. Nothing he could ask seemed unreasonable to him. *What do you know about marriage?* As if one could make an exact statement of one's knowledge!

"I know about the money side of marriage, for one thing," she had said in an effort to comply with his demand. "Lyda Wayne thinks that it would be romantic to marry a poor young man and live in a few rooms till they got started. She isn't afraid of life; she thinks she can carry off any combination of circumstances, but I know I couldn't."

"Yes," said Nicolai, "that is what makes you older than your years in certain ways. What else do you know?"

"I know—I mean I think I realize, even more than you do, Niki, that to make a success of marriage we must try always to see the other's point of view; to live and let live. I think unselfishness . . ."

He had interrupted. "Have you ever wondered that I should want to marry again at my age? I have never been lonely, you know—not lonely for a woman in my house—I've told you that. Have you ever wondered?"

That had given her opportunity for relief in humor. Of course she never had wondered that people should want to marry at any age, she said. She should always want to marry, and when he asked her if it held so perfect a prospect she had said, "It does when it includes you"—at which he had smiled, his rare smile, and she had delighted in the crinkling of dark skin around his eyes, at the lifting of grimness from his lips. But even as she admired, the smile was lost in a returning frown and he had fixed his eyes on her.

"The thought I am trying to get to you is this. I am marrying because I want a son. I want an heir—at once. I have told you that I love you, and I do love you. The proof of it is that I chose you. I felt you to be beautiful enough, worthy enough to be the mother of my son—the mother of my sons, I hope. Does this shock you?"

Of course it had shocked her. Not only his even voice, his unblinking stare, and the very thought of that immediate possibility for her, but his frank statement of his expectation from her had shocked her. Once she had

asked him why he had chosen her, and he had told her that he loved her from the first because she was gentle and very, very feminine. "You're an old-world girl, and please remember that I want you to stay that way. Never get heady. That American girl stuff, obstreperous little tyrant, doesn't interest me that much," and he snapped his strong fingers.

It was a shock to be told that he had had a particular purpose behind his love, yet it was not an unnatural purpose. It was beautiful in one way—too beautiful to be discussed in this cold manner as if it were a business agreement. Her own thought had not gone so far into the exactness of her future as to include children definitely; she had thought of them vaguely as possible some time through the miracle of their love, but that was all.

What Nicolai was reading in her face and her silence she did not know, but she realized from his look of suspicion and watchfulness that her impulse to turn the subject off was impossible. She could no more evade the issue than a little trapped animal could escape the hunter. He meant that they should discuss this matter, for he said, insistently, "Certainly you must have thought about this possibility. Why can't you answer me? It is very important to me. Are you, or are you not willing . . ."

"Yes," she had said, sharply, "I am." She found no difficulty then in looking straight into his expressionless eyes. "There should be no doubt in your mind. I want our love to be right, but I resent your talking about it now. Why should you? Am I wrong in believing that children are the . . . gifts of love? Does one say 'I will' or 'I won't'? "

When she finished she was breathing rapidly in an anger that was a surprise to herself, and she watched Nicolai through a mist of vibrating light. He had risen to stand with his back to the fireplace. He was smiling! Suspicion had given way to a gleam of amusement that immediately he concealed.

"Are you asking me that?" he said, raising his eyebrows, and continued, "I understand. You have thought you would have years of irresponsible gaiety. You have talked about travel, charity, a hospital for children and not once did the thought of your own children cross your mind."

"I have been putting my own children forward into the future with my twenty-fifth birthday, I suppose. I have dreamed of being free, for a while at least."

Her anger had cooled. She walked slowly away down the room, running the tips of her fingers along a row of books. "Ever since I was born I have worked in so many ways, studying, playing, living here and there, always urged to do my best, to push through my long preparation for real work and then . . ." She turned at the end of the room, leaned against a high-backed chair and looked at Nicolai across the distance. "When you came into my plans that Sunday it was as if I had been let out of harness." She drew a long breath. "I was just awfully, awfully happy, Niki, and I thought it would last."

"Come here," he said, jerking his head.

"No," she smiled, "I'm going to stay here."

"Very well. Stay there." He walked toward her and stood close beside her, his hands on her shoulders. "And now that you understand what it is I want, you think you are back in harness again?"

"No. I wouldn't put it that way. I can't say just what it is I feel, except that I feel so many things all at once."

"For instance . . ." he urged.

"For instance . . ." she had looked past him, over his shoulder, and as she hesitated the gravity, the dear responsibilities of her love descended upon her. "I want to make you happy, Niki. I shall love a son, I suppose, when I have thought about it more. I would be very proud of him, I know, but if I could choose, I'd like to be a little older. I'd like to play for a while and be really young."

He stood there, unresponsive, reading deep into her eyes.

"I am wondering if you have any idea how important your son will be," he said at last. "What an honor it will be to be his mother. He will be a young prince. He will own vast areas in Canada and almost a whole state in just one tract; he will dictate policies to the government; he will control the paper industry and through that channel he will have power over the press. Do you know what that means? He must be educated as no American is ever educated, especially, brilliantly. He will have tutors whose salaries the universities will not be able to overbid. He will travel, and kings will give him audience. Does that thrill you?"

"Yes. It does. Have you that power now, Nicolai?"

"Most of it. Not as much as I will have when he is ready to take over my affairs; but enough. Can't you see that I must have an heir?"

"Yes, I see."

"And you will be willing? You won't want to wait? No tricks?"

"No . . ."

He was forcing her to promise not once but many times. That was his way. She had learned, in the short time she had been engaged to Nicolai, that she must make every effort to adapt herself happily to his will and to expect no patience from him in her failure to do so. He was inexorable. She might do as she pleased when she was away from him, but when they were together she must defer to his preferences, and he had made her understand that one of his preferences was that she defer gracefully.

She felt a sudden dark loneliness, and across her vision flashed a memory of the afternoon on the train when she waited for the wreckage to be cleared away. She saw the tall pine against the mist-veiled sun, black on copper, and remembered the loneliness of the tree and how she had thought of herself as one with it, always different, always

pressed upon to achieve, never given the freedom of her girlhood, and now Nicolai was the sun, pressing her, urging his ambition upon her. She wanted to be honest with Nicolai if he would let her.

She turned and walked from him, and after a quick move to stop her he hesitated, swung on his heel and went to the divan before the fire.

Because he had released her that she might stroll away for a moment's meditation, she gave her whole attention to watching him. Over her shoulder she had seen him drop down on the divan before the fire and sit there, fixed, staring into the bed of coals, as if he were lonely—more lonely even than she, and when he leaned forward, his elbows on his knees, and covered his face with his hands the attitude was like a cry of reproach to her. He *was* lonely! He had said he wasn't, but of course he was lonely. He was forty and without any one but her to love or to love him.

He had worked brilliantly, acquisitively, to amass the fortune that she was invited to share with him, and in return he was asking her to make their love a living, a companionable thing, that his responsibilities might, in time, rest on young shoulders prepared for the burden. Certainly that was beautiful and right, and if her love were really worthy of the gift he asked, she would not have let the manner of his asking blind her to the sublime beauty of the desire.

Not in exact thought did she perceive her own smallness, but in emotion that swept her like a wind and sent her spinning right about, a very weathervane. She saw, as if the heaven of her love had opened to reveal its deep significance, that love of a child, need for a child, is fundamental and has to do with the desire for immortality. Nicolai was right, not in his urgency—that was tactless and unnecessary—but in his passion to live beyond his own limited years. That and more, visions, understanding of herself, perspective on her own growth she saw

revealed so that she was illumined and eager to share with Nicolai her quickened perception.

Impulsively she went to him and dropped on her knees beside him.

"Nicolai." With fingers as tender as her love could make them she took his hands from before his face and held them between her palms; she lifted her eyes to his insistently, that he might read her sincerity. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry I didn't understand at once, but I understand now. I do want to do anything, everything I can to make you glad you love me. I had a vision just now. I want to tell you. I seemed to see that sometimes, even in our greatest desires, we don't always know what we want. I would have said two months ago that I wanted to make a success of my dancing more than anything else in the world. A month ago I knew that I wanted to live here with you more, *far* more than I wanted any success of my own, and living here with you meant this dear house and the garden, and you, who are so funny and so full of ideas that I don't know anything about." She laughed and heard a little catch in her voice. "Then on Thanksgiving day you took me through the hothouses and explained orchids and mushrooms, and we made a corsage for me to wear, you remember?"—He nodded, listening—"and that was the day I found out about hothouses, how nice they are to have, and then right away I knew I must always have wanted a hothouse."

"Little spendthrift!" he grunted, "now you have several."

"You have several. It is the same, and better than if they were mine alone. And then—the *Russia*—that first trip when you gave me your fur coat and we stood on the bridge and saw the shore all beautiful and blazing with color . . . and the lift of the waves . . . that was such a thrilling day! I remember looking back and seeing the beautiful smoke pouring out of the chimney . . ."

"Smokestack," he corrected quickly.

"Yes, smokestack. It was blacker than midnight, full, plumey, soft, and I said to the captain—because I was thinking how much coal it took to give me a ride—'It must cost dreadfully to run this boat!' "

"Yacht."

"Yacht," Terry repeated obediently. "And Captain Dakeman said, 'More than some families I'd call well off spend on their living in a year.' I thought as he said that, 'Oh, what a burden anything so expensive must be, eating coal!' And then I looked at you, and I realized that it wasn't a burden to you no matter how much it ate. That side didn't weigh with you. The yacht was a delight, why not have it? And so . . . I see . . . a son may as well be just that way! Why *not?* He'll be wonderful to have and a year isn't long."

Nicolai was staring at her with the same sharp scrutiny so that she felt it necessary to put more tenderness, more conviction in her tone. "I can see him as plainly as I see you," she went on, closing her eyes and smiling, "he ran across my vision a minute ago and the name Toni seemed to be dancing around him like a gay little red balloon. T for Terry, and n and i for Nicolai. His real name will be Nicolai, of course, and he will be dignified in his little socks and suits and look amusingly like you. He'll be the center of all this to come home to; we'll love coming home to him."

She had waited after that for some sign from him, but because he gave none she had asked, "Does this make you happy, Nicolai?"

In time she had known that it had made him happy—as happy as she could expect Nicolai to be. He had said, in his first response to her, "Aren't bluffing, are you, Terry? No play acting?" and she had smiled and called him "suspicious Niki."

In her disappointment she had reminded herself that

that was Nicolai, a man who took nothing for granted; who expected to earn or pay for all favors.

He had risen, drawing her up with him, and he had kissed her; had held her close a long time in a silence that she thought might be tense with a gratitude he could not express, yet when he spoke it was without any discernible emotion.

"Then let me tell you," he had said in his terse manner, "here's my promise. You'll never regret it. I'll make up to you in a dozen ways for all the discomfort of the thing. You won't be sick, not a minute. I won't have it. We'll ride and drive and do charity stunts all you want. I'm going to fix up a dowry for you as soon as we're married. You won't need to ask me for money, ever. Is that playing up like a sport, Terry? Tell me. Is it? You see I don't ask something for nothing."

No. He did not ask something for nothing. He paid; in Nicolai's world there were no gratuities.

She smiled at the tiny bride and groom on the pyramidal wedding-cake that she was expected to cut, rose and poised the broad blade of the knife above the snowy confection.

In the quiet before she cut, Gus lifted a commanding hand.

"The wedding cake," he said sadly, in oratorical mockery, "is symbolical of the white—the tender heart of the groom.

"Life gives unto the bride the double edged sword of matrimony.

"Such is the world, and the gods look down in pit-y.

"Smiling—yea *smiling* even.

"As guests—at a wedding feast . . ."

Terry was remembering that Nicolai never had told her his dream.

BOOK TWO

NICOLAI

You talk of this and that, of that and this;
Have you ever tried, since you've been over
here
Just being a plain American, my friend?
—*Harry Kemp.*

I

OCTOBER had come again, the ninth October of the twentieth century, and with her usual disbelief in the power of death, the smiling month put on her most colorful robes for the last days of her allotted time. All through Karanoff Park the maple trees wore their bravest red, and the great brown oaks that towered above the others of the woods were sending their bronze and yellow leaves in airy spirals to the earth.

Dr. Field, tramping along a red bark path, looked down on the lake that lay placid in the mild sunshine, observing that though its bosom rose rhythmically and fell as if it were breathing the leafy odors from the shore, its surface was unbroken by any rippling movement of the wind.

The path climbed to the hilltop where The Towers spread its angled breadth, and he noticed its awnings, lowered against the sun, and that along terrace and balcony an occasional French door stood open.

Emerging from the woods, he followed a low stucco wall that marked the boundary of the lawns and stopped to rest near the house where the arched colonnades of the breakfast loggia faced the south and the lake, the east and the woods that swung in toward the house at that point.

As he laid his stick on the wall and bared his head to the inert sunlight he saw a housemaid in white uniform who was looking through the trees toward a wooded peninsula that ran out sharply from the mainland, cleaving the polished surface of the lake to form a little harbor.

"When the yacht comes around that point," the girl said to someone behind her, "you better knock out your

ashes and look to your manners. It ought to be here any minute now. I do wish they'd get here when they say they will."

Field caught the fragrance of pipe smoke and the murmur of a man's voice before he saw, through the diffused dimness of the screens, that Carter was leaning in one of the arches. Field said, lifting his hand, "How do you do. It's a beautiful day. Are you looking for the *Russia?*"

Carter took his pipe from his mouth as he moved nearer the screen. "Yes, sir, Mr. and Mrs. Karanoff have been in Chicago a few days. We've been expecting them right along since noon."

Field nodded acknowledgment of the information. "This is a most beautiful view you have from here," he said pleasantly.

"Yes sir. Mr. and Mrs. Karanoff are very fond of this view, sir."

"Especially Mrs. Karanoff," the girl said, and she repeated, "I do wish folks would come when they say they will." Her voice was plaintive but she added as if in explanation of her impatience, "I just know how anxious Mrs. Karanoff is to get home. She loves everything here so much it just does a body good to see her when she comes. She'll praise everything and go around with her smile fairly kissin' the furniture."

Field nodded on the assumption that the girl was addressing him, decided that she must be Lena, of whom he had heard, and put on his hat preparatory to departure. He could not say that he knew Mrs. Karanoff much better than he had a year ago when she came to White Falls, but it was not difficult to imagine her delight in her home nor the smile that he could well understand might be described as fairly kissin' the furniture.

As he took his stick carefully from out a mass of Virginia creeper, the girl sighted the *Russia* and ran squealing into the house, where he could hear her calling, "Here it is, everybody. Here they are."

The yacht had rounded the point. It had appeared so suddenly, looming white and vital in the foreground, that Field was startled to see how close it was. It came head on; the triangle of the prow cut the placid blue of the lake and lifted it in boiling foam while little waves, like pivoting soldiers in quickstep, marched beside it in long diagonal lines toward either shore. In the moment of swift advance, before the vessel swung in a full graceful curve, Field, thrilling at the sight, heard the imperative voice of a bell; heard someone shout, then, in the quiet that followed the cessation of the engines the ship slid up to the pier with a rustling, a murmur like the whisper of silk.

Field went back to the red bark path and stepped in among the trees. He did not want to appear a committee of one there to welcome the returning travelers, yet he found it difficult to turn away from the scene that was like a pantomime performance in which particular study had been given to the use of color. The blinding white of the ship lay full in sunlight on the heaving blue; there was the glittering tracery of brass, the red of the funnels, and sailors in blue blouses and trousers, correctly tight about the hips, flapping around their nimble feet.

Motionless at one end of the bridge, the captain in severe white uniform and Karanoff wearing dark mufti looked down on the activity below, while in the center of the foreground Mrs. Karanoff done in golden-rod yellow from little hat to white shod feet, was smiling up at the house as she walked slowly forward on the deck, her body moving with the flexuous grace Field knew as peculiarly her own.

While Field continued along his way, seeing before him on the sinuous path the lilting yellow figure, Terry was beginning the steep ascent to the house with the happy anticipation of homecoming.

Halfway up, a pair of stone benches suggested rest and

there she stopped and sat down, to listen to the lazy tinkle of the little waterfall close by. It was at this spot most artfully arranged, that the winding path and sauntering brook met under the low-hung branches of the oaks.

"Brook's almost dry," Karanoff observed, overtaking her there.

"It needs rain," Terry suggested.

"Peter might use the hose to advantage till it does rain. I suppose he's let the pool go dry."

"Why should it be full when we are gone?" Terry asked, always quick to defend the servants. "Peter has his troubles with the leaves that fall into the pool. When it's dry he can keep it clean better."

"I like it full."

"Oh, Nicolai, I like it all. I love it more every time we come back. It's always surprisingly more lovely than I remembered it. And here I sit and say nothing, I just drink it in and love it and love it."

"Say nothing! You talk about it all the time."

Terry looked up into the branches of the tree and laughed. "Do I? I want you to know, but the feeling in me when I sit here loving it is more like music than anything else, and you can see that nothing I say could express that."

Karanoff looked at her upturned face. "Let's get along," he suggested, rising, and offered her a hand.

"I must make a big fuss over the house, you know," she whispered. "Lena just follows me around waiting to see if I'll notice all the little things she had done for me. I love Lena too. She is so good."

"She's good because she's paid. When you over-bid the market on servants you buy considerable love of Lena's sort."

"Oh, you mercenary Niki! Money, money, money is all you think."

"And money, money, money is all you spend."

She turned on the top step and looked back over the

lake where the setting sun poured gold on the water that still heaved softly from the yacht's disturbing passage. The shores as far as she could see were flaming red and yellow against bronze, and in the foreground close to the house, the same colors were repeated in the formal gardens.

It was never on these gardens that Terry's eyes lingered during the daylight hours. She called them the palace of a thousand nights; the woods were sanctuary. She had named everything about the place and it delighted her to notice that Nicolai was beginning unconsciously to accept her nomenclature. The trees, particularly the ones that had distinctive features, had all been thoughtfully christened. There was Siesta, the oak whose branches drooped drowsily above the seats on the path; Aspiration was the elm that lifted her arms to the god of rain and sunlight, and down near the water's edge eight slender birches moved and quivered in the lightest breeze, a shy company whom Terry called the Virgins. One night she showed Karanoff the dance they did when only the moon could see.

That evening they sat long over the dinner Carter served in the loggia. The night was so warm even after the sun had set that at the last minute Terry decided for one more dinner out of doors. The moon had risen early and when the table was cleared Terry had the candles removed that they might enjoy the moonlight on garden and lake. Karanoff smoked, stretched comfortably in a chaise longue, his eyes wandering over moon-silvered lawn and garden that lay distinct and lovely against the contrasting shadows of the surrounding walls.

Terry, standing with her arms crossed on the back of his chair, looked beyond where the *Russia,* white and glittering with polished brass, swayed at anchor, and presently she said, turning her face down to look at Karanoff, "I have been waiting all this day long to see if you'd remember anything."

"Is there something to remember?" he asked indifferently.

"I think there is. I have lived it over—every bit again."

"October fifth," he mused.

"October fifth," Terry repeated sweetly and held a memory above him like a sugar plum.

"I was waiting for the train . . . Walking on the platform . . . With Mrs. Withington. . . ." She offered the reminders as if she were lowering the delectable sugarplum nearer his waiting lips.

"Oh. The day we met. October fifth."

"Are you glad?" Terry asked, quite sure of the answer but wanting to hear the words. "Glad everything happened as it did?"

Nicolai did not reply at once. He pulled on his cigar and its light brightened and glowed. "Sometimes I wonder, Terry, if you care less or if you forget. Sometimes I even question your sincerity with me that night." The words came slowly in his heavy voice and Terry felt the threatening chill of his ugliest mood. She stood silent, but her hands came together in a quick motion of fear.

"I have watched you this fall," he went on evenly, "and I find you so childishly light I cannot think you care."

"Nicolai . . ." She moistened her lips and closed her eyes; then huskily—"Are we to go over this again? Does it do us any good? I am trying to wait and be patient. It isn't true that I do not care."

"You've said that before. You've told me how you feel but it doesn't show in your behavior."

"You mean that because I am happy, you think I do not remember?"

"How can you be happy when you know I am disappointed?"

"I am happy because—I have felt that you loved me. Because I have so much now. I can't be sad over just one thing that is lacking."

"It's a very important thing that is lacking. It matters more to me than anything else. You don't seem to feel my disappointment."

"Nicolai?" The three syllables tinkled like a bell in the stillness. Raising her hands she pressed them against her eyes and moved them upward to her forehead as if she would hold back a pain that struck across her head. The lifting curve of her lips was compressed. She began again; she wanted so much to make him understand, and words were difficult.

"Would . . . there be a son any sooner if I moped and cried?"

"Oh, damn. No! But can't you act as if you cared? I don't want you to mope and cry, but how can you sing and dance around here when you know how I feel?"

"However you feel about that or about me, I am happy. Babies don't always come at once. And since ours hasn't come yet I have just been able to wait."

"That is easy enough for you, my dear, you are twenty, I am forty-one."

"I can't help that. I can't make it different."

"You can keep from acting so resigned."

"Nicolai, do you ever think that perhaps you are spoiled? You have always managed to get what you want and you can't bear disappointment. You have set your heart on this with almost foolish insistence. It may be that you are to be denied this one thing."

Nicolai was angry. He jumped from his chair chewing at his cigar and turned toward the house. "I see," he snapped. "You are resigned. You think your God may have decided that I am to be 'denied something' "—Clara's words—"Perhaps He has, but I usually find a way in spite of Him."

He stepped into the breakfast room, but turned back and walked up close to her. "I think you showed your own lightness in that thing you said. *You* can wait. You leave it to God! You can be happy even if He does

punish me." The scorn, the contempt of insult were in his tone.

"Oh!" Terry's eyes were wide with alarm. "Nicolai, don't say such things. It almost seems as if you doubted my love—all love—when you talk that way. Look at me, Niki. Look and see how much I do care. You mustn't say I was not sincere that night before we were married when we talked about a son. I was. I have wanted him just the same ever since. When I am in the woods or by the water I always fancy he is with me. I see him running on the lawn and I smile to think how he'd throw stones in the lake. You didn't mean that, Nicolai." She put her arms up, caressed his shoulders, and kissed the chin he held high above her.

He sat down on the edge of the table and drew her between his knees.

"Terry, don't you ever talk to me about God," he said roughly, his hands on her shoulders. He gave her a little shake. "How much of this expensive plant would be here for you to enjoy if I were 'resigned,' " he mocked at the word, "and thought God were 'denying me' things? I go after what I want." His jaws snapped over the words. "I get them, and the only god I believe in is the god in me that helps me when I help myself. Strong men don't prattle that way. They don't permit 'deny' and 'resignation' and 'God's will' . . . to get into their vocabularies. Evidently you do. Now look me in the eyes. Do you think the Chicago doctors really tried to find the trouble?"

Terry's lips were quivering so with the tears she fought to hold back that she could not speak. She nodded and her breath came in short gasps.

"You think they tried—were interested?"

"I do!"

"Tell me again what they said when I was not in the room."

"They said I was normal. There was nothing that could be done."

The insistent tears crept from under her lashes and rolled down her cheeks.

"And you think they understood that I had had a son? Do you?"

She nodded, unable to speak, trying desperately to hide her tears because any expression of grief always made him angry. But he was angry anyway and, rising, pushed past her, his hands thrust deep in his pockets.

Released for a few moments, Terry went to the screen door and slowly pushed it open while she hesitated, poised, to see if he would call her back. Evidently he did not want her. He was smoking again furiously.

She stepped out and went across the lawn where the fountain, tinkling in the moonlight, made treble music that came to her smarting senses like the sound of a baby's laugh. Standing there by the pool she stretched her hand into the spray that glistened in the moonlight, but she could see Nicolai's dark bulk in the loggia. He was watching her; he was telling himself that she had gone off like a child to play in the fountain. Lately he had begun to hate her love of the beauty he gave her, to resent her delight in things like the blue of his Chinese porcelains, the green of jade, the sound of a waterfall, because he was too rebellious to share them. "Bah," he had cried at her, "possess them because other people desire them, but don't love them. Time is slipping away. In a few months we shall have been married a year . . ."

Thus he had talked during the days before he had taken her to Chicago.

Terry left the pool, stood irresolute, then bent above the cosmos that starred the moon-drenched garden, knowing with certainty that he would follow her. There was no escape; and even as she anticipated it, she heard the screen's closing click and saw him crossing the lawn to her.

She turned to meet him, and it was she who spoke first.

"Nicolai, let's go down under Siesta for a while."

As they moved toward the steps she was thinking of his dream that he would not let her forget—the dream she had wondered about on her wedding day. It was impossible for her to see it as significant of more than his natural suspicion distorted by some slight physical disturbance.

He had dreamed on the night before he had told her of his desire for a son, that he was swimming in a sea dark as a well; as he struggled he became aware of a covering or roof low over the water that was shutting down on him, but the panic that followed upon that realization had been nothing to the horror that he was being drawn down into the water by strange creeping hands. He had struggled, fought; he had gasped and choked for breath while the fear that he was in the toils of an octopus became a certainty. When he had felt that death was but a moment distant, light had shone down on him and he had seen Napoleon bending above him, offering a hand. Together they had fought off the monster and as it sank, defeated of its prey, Nicolai had seen that the thing had Terry's eyes.

The two race streams that met in Nicolai were freighted with superstition. He saw no inconsistency in scorning the supernatural of his mother's religion but in accepting the agglomerate vagary of a dream in which to root his conviction that Terry might, perhaps unconsciously, be the means of destruction for him. He wanted perpetuation of the flesh through her, yet his dream was a warning that he should heed. But for Napoleon's vivid presence he might not have been so deeply impressed by it, but Napoleon was sacred to him, essence of his ego, in him made carnate.

To Terry it was the veriest rubbish, just as a similar nightmare would have seemed rubbish to him had she dwelt upon it, yet when she had said, upon the conclusion of his recital of the thing in all its fantastic detail, "Surely if it had my eyes it couldn't have been entirely sinister,"

he had made her understand that it was not thus lightly to be dismissed.

Under Siesta Terry paused and looked around at the crowding ferns and all the little rock plants trembling there in shadow like child friends reaching on tiptoe for a greeting that she had no heart to give them.

She turned to Nicolai as he sat down on the stone bench, and bending sidewise pulled up a fern that he looked at unseeingly before he began slowly to pick it to pieces.

He did not make room for her beside him. His large body in its easy sprawling attitude occupied most of the bench; he expected her to sit across from him but she stood beside him looking down at the hands that tore the fern, wondering how it could be that even in his darkest moods her whole body yearned toward him with clinging dependence. If he should reach up to her and tell her he was sorry, she would forgive him instantly. She could not believe he meant all the fierce hard things he said, yet it was clear to her tonight that his disappointment was getting away from his control. Not only the son now but the triumph of his own will was the point and he could not bear that she should be happy while he fretted for a wish ungranted.

He tossed the stem of the fern away and looked up. "Terry, I will send you to Dr. Reybaud's clinic in Paris for the winter. Somebody shall discover that trouble before we admit that it is what the Chicago doctor said."

"A clinic? In Paris? For the winter? No, Nicolai!" The dismay in her voice died as she forced it to rise in an effort toward sweetness. "He didn't say anything for me to admit or deny."

"Oh, yes he did." His hard eyes were fixed on her face. "He told me—perhaps you didn't hear him—that our case was like Napoleon and Josephine. Incompatibility." He added deliberately and with emphasis, "There is only one remedy for that. That's the remedy Napoleon took."

His lips shut on the words and he felt for his cigar case. The memory of his dream was upon him, that year-old dream that clung.

It was a perceptible moment before Terry's tear-bright eyes contracted in understanding of his words. She stared at him, her lips parted, and she felt her tongue and throat go dry. He meant . . . He was telling her . . . divorce . . .

Until she felt her knees sinking Terry stood motionless, hardly breathing, but like a garment loosened and suddenly slipping to the floor, her strength dropped from her. She moved backward, groping for support, and sat on the edge of the bench.

Nicolai was looking at her again. She had lifted her head and as she gazed across at him she felt the heat of a white hot fire raging through her veins, burning in her eyes and her throat, yet when she spoke she was able to hold her voice steady. "Tell me everything he said," she commanded, and knew from Nicolai's movement that he felt no uncertainty but that at last her "lightness" had been startled. He began to explain.

"It was Dr. Nordhoff. He reminded me that Josephine, the Empress, had had two children before she married Napoleon. Napoleon divorced her when she didn't give him an heir and then he married Louise of Austria. You remember that. Then he and Louise had a son, the Dauphin. He said it was the most famous case of physical incompatibility in the history of medicine. We aren't going to give up and admit that it is that with us," he continued, avoiding her steady gaze. "I will take you to France. They know a thing or two about science over there."

She had risen. He also rose and as they faced each other he put his arm about her shoulders and tried to turn her toward the steps. She shook off his arm and stepped back from him, her angry eyes fastened on his face. Ignoring her inarticulate astonishment, he said, as if there

had been no cataclysmic speech between them, "Come. It is getting cold. We must go in."

Still she did not answer him and he added, "I will not leave you here."

His anger was spent. He had wreaked it on her and, now that she had turned in anger back on him, his mood had passed. She could see that he almost regretted that he had mentioned the case of Napoleon and Josephine. All the trip up on the *Russia* he had been pondering the doctor's words, for of course they had struck him with particular force because of his secret belief that he, Karanoff, was the re-embodied spirit of Napoleon. It was his dearest vanity and this that Dr. Nordhoff had said fitted into the picture; his son and Ekanarena's . . . and now . . . when he, like Napoleon, desired an heir . . .

He folded his arms and stared at her stony face in a manner elaborately expressive of a patience he did not feel. Had there been need for patience he would not have given it. He was worried, disturbed by the effect his suggestion had produced in her. Yet she observed this only superficially; her eyes were turned blindly toward the lake.

Never before had her thought run with such speed. Like a line of fire it blazed through her mind and lit, as it ran, little hints, suggestions that she had not understood before. He had thought that she had heard Dr. Nordhoff's talk about Napoleon; he had supposed she had understood all the things he had said with that in mind. And while he hinted she had laughed at the waves and sung with the joy of life. To think he had supposed she knew and did not care . . . knew that she had become a Josephine in his mind and had not cared.

There were no tears for her tonight. Sleep would never touch her while this flame burned in her mind. She felt hot with fever, her lips were dry and stiff, but the light breeze that sprang up across the water set her shaking with chill. Karanoff saw her shiver; he bent and lifted

her up against him; "You are cold," but she did not yield and she said, resisting him:

"I am not cold, I am on fire."

"You are shaking with a chill. I feel you tremble, Terry."

He was sorry now, but he would not apologize. He could not say he had not meant it all, for he had meant it. She brought her burning gaze back to him.

"Nicolai," she said, seating herself again, "I used to wonder if I would be strong enough to grasp my thistles when they came. You have offered me the first one of my life and I am going to take hold of it right now because I'm not afraid. Are you really thinking of divorcing me that you may be free to marry a Louise?"

Nicolai met with patient disdain the steady pressure of her eyes. "Are you?" she urged. "Please answer me."

He blinked and sat down beside her. "What possible good can it do for you to ask me a question like that?"

"I expect you to answer it. You have planned, haven't you, to do this thing because it is the only means to your ambition?"

"Perhaps I have. Certainly I do not babble my deepest thoughts and you are not going to make a quarrel out of this tonight. I am disappointed. I planned almost a year ago that by now my wish would be granted. I planned that even before I asked you to marry me."

"You were so sure of me from the first?"

"I am sure of anything I want."

He was sure of everything he wanted because law and reason and broken hearts, it seemed, presented no obstacles to him. What Napoleon had had the will to do with the love that was immortal for its warmth and loyalty he could do. She looked at him with new eyes and her breath caught. Why had she ever learned to love him so? Why had she given herself with such perfect trust? Why hadn't she sensed this cruelty that now she saw so clearly? She tried to answer her own questionings and remembered

how she had loved the things Nicolai stood for in her eyes—romance, luxury, power, worldly experience. She remembered that she had wanted to love him completely, that she had willed to love him with utter self-forgetfulness. She had tried with all her heart's generosity to make him happy and, in giving, she had created an ideal of her own making to which now she was bound by a passion that could not be cooled in an hour, in a year, maybe —who could say?—in a lifetime.

She could not separate, even by taking thought of it, the part of their bond that was spiritual from the bond that, clearly, was physical. She knew, because the fact was daily made concrete to her, that she loved his body. Every move he made was thrilling to her, every flaring glance from his eyes stirred her pulse. He was hers, they were one—the words had new meaning—until his body had become her body and her body had become his body. It was physical and spiritual; reality and symbol; beautiful and sacred. And yet it must be that she alone felt this union, for otherwise Nicolai could not be cruel to her as the monster Napoleon had been cruel.

She felt, to her surprise, no sting of tears. Tears were far back in the girlhood she had left in the garden by the fountain, for she was awake now, grown suddenly mature and looking back with sorry eyes at the child she had been. She even tried to smile and felt, as if it were the effect of a narcotic easing the tingling of her nerves, a new courage creeping into her thought.

She lifted her cold hand to her cheek with an inquiring touch. It seemed to have shrunken, to be pinched with pain.

"Terry." Nicolai took the hand and pressed it against his forehead as he leaned toward her, elbows on knees. She looked down at his black head and understood that though he was sorry he would not relent. He had announced his decision.

"I thought that thing about physical incompatibility

was interesting. I have worshipped Napoleon all my life, but I had never got just that angle on his affair with Josephine before."

She made no response but she suffered his ingratiating advances. He ran his hand up her arm and rising, gathered her close against him. "My little beautiful Terry," he whispered and kissed her, but she made no response.

To herself the new woman in her was saying, "Napoleon admitted until the last that he loved Josephine."

II

IT was to thoughts of Josephine that Terry clung as she made ready for bed. She bent her memory to the task of recalling the story of the divorce as she had once known it, but she could remember little and her effort to concentrate was nothing more than a forcible holding of her emotion in check. To let her thoughts fly back to herself would result, she knew, in an illness of fear and self-pity. She wanted to hold herself firm; she shut her teeth till they ached from the pressure, and tightened the muscles about her eyes. She would not suffer tonight; her will refused to let Nicolai see or hear the least evidence of the havoc he had wrought for her. Over and over she said some disconnected phrase that she recalled from Napoleon's life. Nicolai had told her once about his marvelous memory and she repeated to herself now that he had learned military law in twenty-four hours—"twenty-four hours, military law while he was a prisoner somewhere."

Again and again she was shaken by a chill that she managed to control and through it all she followed the routine of her disrobing. Once she thought she heard Nicolai's hand on her dressing room door and when, a moment after, he knocked she did not reply but sat staring at the knob. He went away; she heard him opening windows,

then the snap of an electric button and knew that he was in bed. She stood shivering in her thin nightgown, afraid to open the door. She assured herself of her anger, of her indignation and pride, and she wondered what Josephine had said to Napoleon.

After all, hadn't Josephine's grandchildren been the heirs to the Emperor's throne?

Still trying to remember about that she opened her wardrobe to select a dressing gown and saw hanging there the dozen or so negligées she had bought at different times with so much delight. In her girlhood there had never been a time when anything so luxurious as a silken lounging robe was justified. Her needs for the clothing necessary to her theatrical and school life had been exacting, and the garments of her maiden seclusion were the serviceable cotton crepe and blanket robes of the cheaper sort. Since her marriage there had been no limit to her buying power and she had particularly enjoyed the possession of these soft graceful things that hung before her now. Her hand went unconsciously toward the warmest of her robes, a claret-colored velvet bordered with fur that she drew into the light; and as she slipped her arms into the wide sleeves with their chiffon draperies she caught a glimpse of herself in one of the mirrors.

She had chosen the most regal of her gowns. "This," she thought as she looked down at the glowing velvet, "is what Josephine might have worn." She stooped for slippers, selected a pair of satin mules, and put her feet into their fur lined warmth. Again she shook with cold and again she forced her mind back to Josephine. Josephine shamed; Josephine, the most conspicuous woman in the world . . .

She unlocked her door, softly slipping the bolt, and opened it. The bedroom was dark but the light from her dressing-room revealed Nicolai comfortably settled in his bed, a blanket drawn up around his neck. His face was toward her but his eyes were closed and he did not move.

Through a door opening on a balcony a fresh breeze blew in from the lake. Terry put out her light and stepping into the room listened to Nicolai's breathing. He was asleep, asleep so soon; he could forget and sleep . . . She stood and looked at him and she hated him. At last the only thought that could ease her pain and come to her, for she knew that if she could hate him she could live through whatever must come. She could return sharpness for sharpness; she could shrug and sleep and forget as he forgot her now.

Her bedclothes were turned back and she slipped in between the sheets still wrapped in her velvet robe. But there was no sleep for her, no tears to ease the smarting of her eyes, and long after she had relaxed to the warmth of the bed she lay so wide awake that every rustling sound from the park was magnified in her ears. The pain in her heart was still, and she marveled that it could pass so soon. The hatred that had poured into her veins had been as morphia to her hurt.

She could see through the open door the stars that quivered in the night above the trees and as she kept her gaze lifted to the sky, she felt with growing peace the sense of her own smallness, the vastness of that multitude of worlds whirling above her. She repeated the psalm of night that she had memorized during her Cumnock course; it had been a "reading" to her then, musically rhythmical but meaningless, except as a poetic conception of night. Now it came as a voice . . . "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge . . ."

She repeated it slowly with understanding phrasing. It was beautiful and quieting. She said it to the end, then she began the twenty-third psalm: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul . . ." A sob caught her throat suddenly and her breast swelled with a terrible

emotion that brought back the pain to her heart. She turned her tear wet face into the pillow hungering for the lost Nicolai whom she loved, whom she loved and loved more deeply than, until now, even she herself had known! The sobbing of her breath could not be stilled; she tried desperately to stop but failed. Fearing that Nicolai would wake she groped blindly for her slippers and fled into the dark hall, nor did she pause until she sank to the lowest step of the stairs and crossing her arms on her knees, cradled her head and sobbed.

All the hatred had gone and as with the passing of the sedative the pain returns with a poignancy more keen because it stabs wounds unhealed, so Terry felt that now her grief was greatest.

At last she rose and with never a thought for the fears of the night she went to Nicolai's study. There on the table was the portrait of Napoleon. She sat in his chair and leaned upon the desk gazing into the face of the warrior. "Murderer," she whispered. What had he done to deserve worship? What was he, Napoleon, but a smart, unscrupulous, wilful murderer? He had had ambition and magnetism. He would have shone as an actor, as a reformer perhaps, but had he done anything real for France?

She took the picture in both hands and studied it. Except for an occasional long tearless sob she was motionless, gazing at the Corsican as if in his features she might find new understanding of the Russian whose ambition, like Napoleon's, could crucify a woman's love. She sat so long, so still that gradually the quivering breaths ceased and she was quiet.

She turned the picture over and looked at the back of the frame, she studied the engraving on the gold and the jeweled initials at the top, then turning about, she looked at the gold embroidered monogram N. K. on the back of Nicolai's chair. How strange it was that she had not known this thing might happen. Nicolai's belief that he

was the reincarnated spirit of Napoleon could lead only to the development in himself of such qualities as he most admired in the conqueror. She might have foreseen this, but she had fatuously supposed that his love for her was greater than his ambition for a son, an heir, a bit of his own selfish flesh to be spoiled and hurt by the monstrous fortune he had amassed, a fortune won by ruthlessness such as this ruthlessness to her. If he could stab and toss aside his adoring young wife what would he not do to men who got in his way? What had he done?

She rose, and lifting the portrait of Napoleon, brought it down on the corner of the desk. The glass broke and fell in a shower at her feet; she tossed what was left of it on to the blotter and turned away. Hate had returned and she clung to it, for the sting of it, like the thrust of the hypodermic needle, promised relief. She walked about the study aimlessly until, attracted by the case of books devoted to Napoleon and his time, she paused and chose a volume. She was not interested in Napoleon as militarist, as man, nor as Emperor. Consulting the index she turned to the story of his relations to Josephine, sank to the soft rug, her feet curled under her, and as she read saw, instead of the short, square-shouldered Corsican, the tall, heavy frame and dark elegance of Karanoff.

It was not hard to substitute herself for Josephine. She read, fascinated, with eyes that at first were veiled with tears of sympathy and pity for herself and for the unfortunate Empress, but as the pressure of Napoleon's selfishness grew stronger and as Josephine weakened under it Terry felt her pride resisting the appeal of Josephine's tears. It seemed to the American girl that the Creole woman had cheapened herself. She had wept and pleaded, she had fainted and screamed. It was often necessary, as the day of divorce approached, to carry her fainting from the room. This happened many times, and always Josephine's tearful entreaties were met by Napoleon's firm refusal to reconsider.

If Napoleon was cruel, Josephine was childish. Terry found herself scornful of a woman who had so little dignity, so little pride. Her tears dried on her hot cheeks and she raised her head, staring before her unseeingly.

For a moment her fixed gaze comprehended nothing within its range; the inner vision of a beautiful and prostrate queen, discarded, that the Emperor might marry a possible mother for his heir held her completely. Then something in the hall moved, she started and saw that she was staring at a pair of bare ankles above gray felt slippers and the tassel of a bathrobe cord dangling between the feet. Her eyes ran up the figure and saw Carter motionless, his curious gaze on her face.

"How long have you been there?" she asked, laying her arm across the book on her knees.

Carter moved forward a step and spread the portiere across his deshabille. "I just came," he said. "I didn't know whether to speak or not. I thought I might frighten you."

Terry, sitting on the floor, her tear-marked face uplifted to Carter, was within the rays of the reading light where they fell from under the shade unsoftened by tinted silk. She knew the marks of her emotion must be plainly visible to Carter and she said hastily, "I can't sleep tonight; so I came down to read. Did you think I was a burglar?"

"For a minute I did. I was sleeping pretty sound up in my room a while ago when I waked suddenly and sat up. I listened and waited but I didn't hear anything more so I lay down again. But I couldn't sleep, I carry the house that heavy on my mind, Mrs. Karanoff. So a while ago I got up and went to the window. I saw light on the lawn and to myself I said, 'That's burglars this time sure!' I don't know how many times I've thought I heard burglars in this house, but I never yet found one. I thought I heard glass break."

He leaned into the room and looked about. But one

lamp was burning and in its light on the writing table and on the floor near Terry lay the broken glass. Terry had forgotten it but she saw it at the same moment Carter did and put her hand out over it.

"That . . . that," she began, shocked by the look of wanton destruction, "is a picture I broke."

Carter had come into the room; he was bending above the wreckage.

"It was an accident," Terry said more steadily, and knew that he did not believe her. There was no look of accident about the thing. The inner case of the miniature was tossed on to the table face down; it must be evident that after destroying it she had not even touched it to see the extent of the damage.

Carter's tone, when he spoke after a sharp glance at her, exactly echoed her own perturbation.

"It's Mr. Karanoff's portrait of Napoleon . . ." He turned it over with careful fingers. "I'm afraid he'll feel very badly about this. When I first came to Mr. Karanoff the ivory was set in the jewels only, and because he was that choice of it he had it put under glass and framed in this gold . . ."

"I was careless," said Terry, trying to feel again the anger that had shaken her when she struck it. "I'll tell Mr. Karanoff about it in the morning. Just lay it on the table please."

"Hadn't I better clean up the glass now and find a box for the remains?"

Terry met his steady eyes. They were telling her that he understood the master's wrath better than she; they were offering her wise counsel; as she hesitated they brought pleading to the argument. But Terry wanted to anger Nicolai; she wanted him to see exactly what Carter had seen—that she had broken the picture in hatred and defiance.

She said "No," firmly, and added, "Thank you. Please leave it exactly as you found it."

She rose, slipped the book back into the case and stood, her robe wrapped about her, while Carter obeyed slowly. He put the picture face down on the blotter and carefully pushed the bits of glass about it.

"That's right," Terry said, still firm, still playing defiance. "Now leave it just that way, please."

III

IT was early morning when Terry waked. The tragic emotions of the night had unfitted her for rest and she had tossed and dreamed for hours in her struggle to throw off the burden of fear that pressed upon her. She turned to look at Karanoff, who was sleeping soundly, and as she reviewed the pain of the night she made an effort to summon a return of her anger. The memory of the broken picture was in the foreground of her thought just then. Although she assured herself that it was a trifling nothing, that she would let Nicolai discover it for himself and, when he questioned her, she would tell him how little she cared, and how she despised everything Napoleon stood for, she was sick with dread.

She lay watching the dawn through the open doors. The great trees of the park rose between her and the sky and swayed with a wide swinging motion, slow and rhythmical in the wind that had risen with the sun, and because she was trying desperately to think of something beside the wreckage on the study floor, she fancied that tall trees felt themselves aloof from human woe. Like mountain tops and clouds, benign, compassionate even, but far, far removed from the stress of world selfishness.

Holding to the thought of the trees as she might hold in the dark to one familiar object while reaching for another, she found the memory of a summer in her childhood when she had played in a garden beside a lake somewhere

in Michigan. There had been trees in the garden and, high up in one, the gardener had built her a seat with a back and arms. There she had climbed to rock in the wind and sing slowly, as she swayed in the branches. That summer—it was the one when Aunt Mabel had had a nervous breakdown and had been obliged to retire completely from her exciting life—had been among the dearest of Terry's memories, for it had brought her the treasure of her first tree friendship, which recently she had found immortalized in a couplet from some anonymous poet:

> "And better must all childhood be
> That knows a garden and a tree."

She turned to look at Nicolai, moving with warm luxury in his soft bed, as she thought, with the consciousness of having touched on truth, that nothing Nicolai had bought for her, nothing life could give her, would rival in sheer happiness that time in her childhood when she had been transported from her Chicago pavement play to intimate relations with a garden and a tree.

Instantly, however, the lovely memory fled, for she was looking into Nicolai's cold eyes, half open, still and startling as the eyes of a watchful animal encountered unexpectedly in the maze of a sunny forest.

Shrinking from his gaze she closed her eyes quickly and lay, hardly breathing, in her fear. In a moment he would speak and she would have to answer. He would command her by his tone and manner to take up their life again where it had been at dinner time on the previous evening, for having shot the poison of his suggestion to startle her contentment, he was ready now to insist that she return to the peace he had destroyed.

Nicolai was like certain parents she knew who punished their children but would not let them cry. Something dark and primitive in him demanded that he hurt her, that he make her suffer, and demanded also that she re-

turn to sweetness when he had tired of quarreling. So far he had had his way with her. She had not been able to resist his imperative demands because she felt always that, deeper than his tempers, was his love for her. Now she doubted that love, and she would let him understand that until he gave evidence of it in contrition she would return measure for measure in unkindness.

Unable to stay longer in the same room with him she rose quickly and slipping into her dressing room, locked the door. She began to dress with trembling haste and was selecting a morning gown before she realized that she was running away from the music she had meant to face with cold dignity. It was too late now to go back, but she would not run away again; for she was not afraid. Certainly—she told herself—nothing Nicolai could do now, nothing cruel he could say would cut her as his threat of last night had cut. She had been living then, sensitive and tender in her love; today that love was dead and the dead can feel no hurt.

Her dress fastened, she opened the door and as she walked quickly across the room toward the hall she did not even glance at Nicolai, but she could feel that he was looking at her.

"Where are you going?" he demanded.

"Down stairs."

"Wait a minute."

"No." Terry opened the door. She felt as if she were defying the lightning, not because she refused to wait but because she refused to wait this morning when she knew his mood.

Nicolai sat up and raised an arm. "Wait a minute," he called. "Terry, I want to talk to you."

Terry turned enough to see him over her shoulder; looked steadily at him from under eyelids that throbbed with the drumming of her heart and, walking out, closed the door with a firm click. She went down stairs and directly to the breakfast room where Carter waited.

"Good morning," she said briskly and smiled straight into Carter's eyes that he might see how different was the young person in morning gingham from the tear-marked wife of the small hours. It hardly seemed possible that he, the man in severe livery, was the gentle old fellow of the gray bathrobe whose look had pleaded with her to escape if she could, the consequences of her wanton destructiveness.

"I am going to have my breakfast now, Carter," she said. "Alone. And I want a newspaper." She was satisfied with the morning cheer she heard in her own voice and she leaned over the table to draw a black nasturtium from the bowl. "Lovely thing. Velvet," she murmured as if her whole thought was on the flower.

With a stage sigh of happiness she sank in her chair and turned to the paper Carter had laid by her plate.

He was filling her glass, and as he set it down she put out her hand for the water.

"Mrs. Karanoff . . ."

Terry looked up arrested by his hesitating tone. "Yes?"

With smooth motions he was moving a doily, straightening a piece of silver. "Would you like me to light the fire?"

"The fire? Why no. Why should we have a fire on this beautiful morning?" Still she did not lift the glass of water. Her eyes were questioning him.

"I saw . . . that your hand was cold."

Terry looked at the hand that lay against the cut work of her doily. It was mottled with cold and quivering nervously. Involuntarily she clasped both hands in her lap while the ghost of a smile twitched sicklily at her lips, and a chill of despair ran over her.

"I think," she said after a pause, "that you meant to say something else. Is the broken glass still troubling you?"

"Yes, ma'am, it is. I can have it up in a few minutes

and perhaps you could have the picture repaired before Mr. Karanoff would miss it. At least . . ."

He seemed to feel that he had said too much for he paused as he took the sugar for her cantaloupe from the serving table.

Terry tried to be deliberate with the sugar. She sprinkled it carefully, regarded the melon with a critical eye and took a little more before she spoke.

"No," she said quietly. "I like it to stay where it is. But I know how kind you mean to be . . . When Lena dusts in there this morning she can clean it up and if Mr. Karanoff sees it in the meantime it won't matter."

Her own stubbornness astonished her. Something new within her like an alien spirit said the words; rather, she was playing a rôle. Those were her lines, decreed by the playwright, and she had no choice but to speak them.

During her breakfast while she disposed of part of her melon, a strip of grilled bacon, a small piece of toast, Carter came and went and she knew he was observing the effort it cost her to eat and drink. She tried to understand the McCutcheon cartoon, but could not make her thought comprehend it, and she became aware that her eyes had not once moved beyond the grotesquerie though she had taken the paper up three times.

It seemed to her that she could hear Nicolai moving above upstairs, yet she knew that to be impossible in The Towers. One did not hear footsteps, even Nicolai's, in a house so built, but her alert eye caught his shadow when he came down the stairs. In another moment his somber gaze would be fixed on her.

She looked about in panic. Carter, fortunately, had left the room and she rose, dropping her napkin and her handkerchief both in her haste. As she turned to leave, Nicolai's person filled the doorway.

"Up early," he remarked, "this is something new, isn't it, for you to breakfast alone?"

He was using his fashionable voice, he was pretending

to be pleasant; but Terry felt the storm beneath his morning manner.

"You won't mind if I leave you?" she asked. "I have finished." She pushed her chair into place and as he stepped forward she moved toward the pantry door and passed through.

Carter was not there either. Probably he had gone to the dining room for something. She listened but heard only Emmanuel's broken Italian in the kitchen. She would take a chance. She went on through the glistening tile of the pantry, to the kitchen and saw, as she had hoped, Lena eating her breakfast in the servants' alcove.

"Lena . . . Please! Will you run into Mr. Karanoff's study and clean up the glass on the floor there? Right away, please. . ." Lena, nodding, had risen, and though she was chewing a much too large piece of toast she was already on her way.

As Terry turned she almost ran into Carter. He had Nicolai's melon in his hands; he was transfixed, his eyes lowered, and when she caught her breath murmuring, "Oh, I didn't see you," he moved past her without making any sign that he had either seen or heard.

IV

FROM the shadow of a lattice at the far end of the rose garden, Terry kept alert watch upon the house for Nicolai's departure, thinking he might step out on the lawn and look about for her before leaving. She felt secure under the heavy Dorothy Perkins vines that arched above her head and, to give herself an excuse for lingering in their protection, she examined the leaves for mildew with an air of concern.

It was probable that Nicolai would order out the Packard and be driven to his office, for he seldom walked when

his mood was other than agreeable, and that he was far from agreeable this morning, Terry knew.

The minutes passed and when he did not come she ventured into the sunny paths to clip a few late blooming tea roses. Nicolai should have finished breakfast long ago and if he were lingering in the house at this hour it meant that he was in his study and that he had, or would soon miss the portrait of Napoleon that she had put behind some books in the case before slipping out to the garden. She wondered with a chill of fear if he had settled himself to wait for her, and immediately with the courage to see herself honestly—she despised herself for lack of courage.

It was impossible for her to understand herself. She was not a craven wincing creature. She knew that there was in her the iron to do difficult things, to bear patiently, yet where Nicolai was concerned she had no control of her nervous apprehension, nor could she act a part with success. It was necessary for her to be sincere when she faced Nicolai, even though she was afraid of him and afraid of her fear, but—a saving point—not afraid to admit it.

She went to the far end of the garden, and, seating herself on a stone bench examined the long-stemmed roses in her lap, absently noticing their unusual coloring and the leaves that were stained with crimson, but her thought was back on the *Russia,* that first night when she had realized Nicolai's fascination and had decided that when he loved her she would cease to be afraid. In a sense she had been right, for her fear was not physical—not any more; it was rather that in his presence she felt the clutch of a force subtle, elusive and always intimidating. She had tried before to reason with herself in an effort to shake it off, but the grip of it had never relaxed.

She rose and paced where the path between two rose beds was soft with leaves that rustled as her feet passed through them and her thought went on to their murmuring accompaniment.

She had never sensed any spirituality in Nicolai. Always he was so materialistic that it was impossible to draw him into the least discussion of the abstract, for whatever his thought might be his talk was of the prosaic, given in short sentences and with scrappy comment; and when he did express opinion it was usually to rage against some American institution or other. She must credit him with respect for the arts—he had learned that in Europe—and yet, if he sensed the spiritual significance of music, he never betrayed the fact. His comments were always practical: "Great artist! Did that Chopin scherzo with the right dash." Or—of an orchestra—"He gets pace out of his men. Too strong with the French horns in the second movement, but the allegro was perfect."

She thought of a night when he had been disappointed that Mr. Rich, whom he expected in for billiards, had not been able to come and the full force of his displeasure had fallen to her lot. To amuse him she had said that she would put on her *Rosalind* doublet and hose; her jaunty cap with the red feather Ellen Terry had given her, and "do" *As You Like It* for him. He had received the suggestion with more animation than Terry had expected from him under the circumstances, and she had flown happily to her dressing room athrill with the prospect of giving her *Rosalind* to so discriminating an audience.

Sprawling in his chair with a long cigar Nicolai had listened, his face as expressionless as a dummy, his heavy-lidded eyes half closed while she, loving the rôle, feeling the spirit and humor of *Rosalind* had gone through the major scenes that she linked with memorized synopses. When she had finished, happy, tired and ready for his appreciation he had said, yawning, "Great chap, Shakespeare. Knows women, but the greatest thing he did to my mind is *The Shrew*."

That had been his comment on her evening's work!

There was little bond for them in the arts, little bond in sports, for boxing, his favorite, was impossible for her.

What was the bond? What held her to him? Of course, in honesty she had to admit it had begun with his money; that had been the important fact to her at first, but it had been followed so quickly by love that she found it hard to separate the two. She believed that love of the man was stronger than her love of his money, and yet a voice within her was bringing argument on this point. "You loved him until he threatened you last night and then you hated him; you hate him now and yet you cling. If you hate him why don't you go in there and tell him so? Why are you afraid? Why do you cringe here in fear of his eyes and voice? He has hurt you, not you him. It is you who should be dispensing wrath, not he. What has he to give that weighs against your love and youth and beauty?" For answer she told herself that they both gave. She knew she gave generously. Nicolai had not failed to tell her how he loved her gifts and herself and yet Nicolai gave to her . . . She looked about. Could she name all the delights he had given her? He had given her peace from the fear of poverty, that first; he had lifted her as on a cloud above the petty economy of her mother's home; he had set her in his house of dreams, and made her its pivotal point. For her the domestic wheels moved ceaselessly to provide luxury and leisure. She stood in the center of an endless circle of loveliness. Nicolai gave. He gave her what a world of beautiful women would sell themselves to buy, and that perhaps was the secret of her fear. It was that Nicolai gave more than she; she had more to lose than he. He could have youth and beauty and sweetness by crooking his finger, but could she find another Karanoff Towers? She knew that she could not. Her thought ran fast now without halting or questioning. The world was sentimental about youth, but any rich man could buy it. Everywhere slender-limbed beauty, misty with dreams, was for sale. She—Terry—was desirable perhaps, but not indispensable. That, then, was the truth, and now she knew that part,

at least, of her fear of Nicolai was a fear of losing the luxury in which he had embowered her. She felt better as she confessed this to herself. She could not walk into the study and blaze her anger at him because he stood between her and poverty; she could not risk losing him. She would either have to take what his temper chose to wreak upon her, or face the loss of all her happiness. He had threatened divorce, and divorce from Nicolai meant to Terry a return to her dancing life. She had not thought about that in the night. She had only suffered in a sea of emotion and the bottom of the sea had been that fate—a return to the old life, the old struggle. But had she been mistaken last night in thinking divorce from Nicolai would mean that? On the contrary, would it not mean large alimony and freedom?

This was a new thought. She sat down to consider it quietly. She wasn't poor. There was her dowry; Nicolai had settled a generous dowry upon her, but because her wants were so lavishly provided for otherwise, she had almost forgotten it. She applied herself to remembering the facts about it. Her personal checks drew on the income from these investments in her name, the securities were in the little safe in her dressing room wall. She so seldom wrote a check that she had no idea how large, now, the amount of the accumulated income had become. She used her charge accounts almost entirely in all the cities where she shopped and the bills were sent to Nicolai's office. Nicolai had made gifts to her mother, very generous gifts, and Terry had sent her clothing that had been charged with her own things on the general account. Nicolai had been lavish with her; he had not limited her nor inquired into her expenditures. Once he had asked her if her income was sufficient and she had outlined a plan to him whereby, if she saved and sent her bills to him, she could soon afford to start the home for crippled children that was her dream. He had smiled as if he were

amused, but he made it clear that he kept no strings on her dowry.

No. If Nicolai divorced her she would not be poor in the way she had been poor before, but she would be alone, a widow who could not explain why she was alone. Some people longed for freedom, but not she, not freedom from Nicolai. She looked about through tears. To be alone, to be turned away from this home, this garden, banished like Josephine, while Nicolai and a Louise . . .

"No . . . No . . ." She cried the words aloud while love and passionate, possessive jealousy seized on her like the madness of panic. She sprang up and the roses that she had forgotten hung on her dress by their thorns before falling under her hurrying feet. She would go in to Nicolai and let him see how she loved him; how dearly, how utterly she loved him.

She ran through the arches, along the paths, into the hall of the house and there she met Carter.

"Where is Mr. Karanoff?" she demanded, pausing in her eager flight toward Nicolai's study.

"Gone this quarter hour. He wanted you; we all looked for you."

"Did he miss the picture?"

Carter cleared his throat and gazed at the wall as if on it he read an unspeakable doom. "He missed the picture. I told him it had fallen face down and that I found it cracked and had sent it to Chicago to be repaired. I felt it necessary . . ."

Terry interrupted. "Then we'll send it to Chicago today and make that true, but not now. Carter . . . Please . . . I want to hurry! Order Melody for me, I'm going to the mills."

V

IT was a beautiful morning for a ride. The soft languor of the day before had been succeeded by a freshening breeze that ruffled the surface of the lake into little white-capped waves, and Terry, hesitating between the two routes to the mills, decided for the bridle path that skirted the lake and led through the woods even though it was the longest way round.

Melody, her little ears erect and sensitive to the sound of the wind in the woods, started briskly but moderated her pace at times to shy with dancing side steps at the leaves that teased her by their fitful movements across her path.

Terry's desire was for speed and, though on any other day she would have indulged Melody's capriciousness, she urged her forward in her eagerness to reach Nicolai's office and begin the overtures for peace that she had decided were necessary for her. She had convinced herself that there could be no happiness without him, and though it was not her fault that they had quarreled it would be her fault if she did not placate him and hold him by her love. To what heights and depths of self-sacrifice that love might lead she did not know, but she did know that she must follow the light always, as she followed it now.

She looked about, loving the trees and the vistas of autumn that opened before her, and she realized that these woods and streams and sheltered paths were Nicolai's, to be taken from her if he so willed. She put a caressing hand on Melody's neck. Even Melody belonged at The Towers and was surer of her home there than she.

They rode on and as the path turned from the lake into the deeper woods Terry saw just ahead of her a

man, walking slowly, his head bent. He had not heard Melody but when he did he threw a quick glance over his shoulder and stepped from the path with suspicious haste.

As Terry drew Melody down to a walk she lost sight of him among the great boled beech trees many of which were wider than a man's body, and she rode forward peering into the mottled sunshine half hoping that he had fled. In a moment she saw him in an attitude of doubt, as if he had been about to hide but had realized that escape now was impossible.

As she gazed at him in questioning alarm he raised his hat and she saw with relief that it was Dr. Field, changed somehow and strangely pale, but smiling slightly as he came toward her through the underbrush. At her greeting, given in a voice sweetly musical with relief, he made no reply, but he put a hand on Melody's bridle and stroked her nose. "I was frightened just for a moment," Terry told him. "I never would have dreamed of finding you here at this hour!"

She had said the wrong thing. He was there at that hour not for the pleasure of a walk but to battle with himself in trouble that had marked his face with shadows of distress. She was high above him on Melody's back and she did not see his eyes as she offered, with an effort toward lightness, "It's a beautiful morning for a walk," but she heard the mockery with which he added "or a ride."

Something sensitive in her own aching heart replied to his tone and she knew, as if he had told her, that this was no time for banalities.

She hesitated, wondering if the fact that he was on her ground, Nicolai's ground, her guest in a sense, gave her the right to speak directly to him. She decided that it did. Her position in White Falls was such that she was given the prerogatives of queen and she had developed in less than a year an assurance that she found was more

to the taste of her friends than her natural reticence. She dismounted and from a place beside him on the path questioned him earnestly.

"Are you . . . is anything wrong, Dr. Field? If you are ill I will gladly give you my horse, or I will ride for help." Not for a moment did she think he was physically ill but certainly his spirit was in travail.

"I came out . . . to walk." His dignity was like a wall between them. Straight backed, his hat against his hip, he looked down from a height into her troubled eyes.

"Only that? I thought . . ." She purposely did not finish the sentence but paused and held his glance, through a prolonged silence that she meant should tell him that her sympathy, her help, were his if he would accept them.

He was suffering now as she had suffered in the night. His eyes were haunted by failure and she, who knew so well the pangs of that despair, could not ride on her way without breaking the restraint his pride put upon her.

She began to speak, hesitatingly, "Dr. Field, you are . . . in trouble. You are lonely and distressed. I want to help you." There was entreaty in her voice and, to add sincerity to her words, she gave him her hand. "Surely, as a friend, you will let me help you."

His fingers closed in a quick grip on her hand, but he shook his head and she saw the tremor that touched his lips. He turned his face slightly from her. "No," he said, "don't." He dropped her hand abruptly. "Go in and see my mother if you will. She is not well."

Terry wanted to cry out a protest against his resistance to her. That two people should be so miserable and yet helpless to comfort one another was an indictment of the code in which they lived. Dr. Field was not curt and arrogant like Nicolai; he was grave and sometimes very quiet, but she had never known him to fail in a charm that went deeper than mere courtesy, yet this morning he was so bitterly goaded by pride that he stood before her unbending and obviously impatient to be alone.

As she made a move to mount he gave her his hand and stood aside to let Melody pass. "There are beautiful trout in the brook," she said lingeringly, loathe to leave him, "if you care to fish."

Her solicitude touched him and he smiled his gratitude with a murmured, "You are very kind."

Terry rode away, slowly at first. "Men must look that way before they commit suicide," she thought. "If anything should happen now, I would not forgive myself for letting his pride hold me away from him." She rode forward faster, her thought concerned with him, and she was almost at the mills before she remembered her own trouble and the task before her.

In the anteroom to Nicolai's office Charlie rose to greet her. "Mr. Karanoff has gone home. He tried to reach you by telephone and when he heard that you were on your way to the office he waited for you as long as he could."

"But why? Why has he gone home at this hour?"

"Mr. Karanoff leaves on the ten-ten for Chicago. He's going on to Washington to be gone nearly two weeks. He wanted to see you."

Terry flew down the hall and out to Melody. There was barely time to reach the station but she made the effort. She sent Melody through the streets at a swift run; they threaded the traffic about the mills without regard for the heavy trucks that claimed the right of way, but when they reached the station platform she saw that the train was already in and that she was at the opposite end from Nicolai's car. In her eagerness to reach him she wanted to ride down the platform beside the train, but she knew Nicolai disliked to have her conspicuous and she looked about for a possible small boy to hold Melody. There was none in sight. As she hesitated a bell rang, and at the warning note she slipped the reins over her arm and ran the length of the train.

She did not see Karanoff until he, catching a glimpse

of her through the car window, came out on to the rear platform and stood frowning down at her. In response to her eager greeting he said coldly, "Where have you been?"

"I was on my way to your office, but I took the long road through the woods," she explained breathlessly. "Come down here where I can reach you."

She put an arm about his shoulders and kissed his chin. "Please," she whispered, "don't go away cross."

He held her from him and looked into her eyes. "When I come back I will talk to you about this pouting," he said severely and Terry dropped back from him while the light of her eager sweetness died from her face.

Nicolai bent and kissed her cheek. "Be good," he admonished and gave her shoulders a little shake.

The train was moving and as he jumped on the step he looked back at her. She had slipped an arm under Melody's neck and she stood, close against her, watching the train. She could see Nicolai and she knew he was not sorry for his threat of the night before. He had meant it all and more, probably, that she could only vaguely conjecture, for she had learned that there was much in his thought and in his life that she was not permitted to glimpse.

In a last effort for success with him she smiled and lifted her hand in a farewell gesture, but he did not respond. He turned and, without a glance back at her, entered the car.

VI

RETURNING to The Towers, Terry went to her room at once and closed the door. She tossed her gloves to the bed and sat down on the window seat to read a note Nicolai had left for Carter to give her. She looked at the envelope, at the irregular bulging char-

acters of her name and at the flap that was firmly sealed to frustrate prying fingers. After her experience at the depot it was easy to guess what he had written and she dreaded to see its contents.

Sitting on the window seat in her riding breeches and boots, her coat unbuttoned, she looked like a beautiful boy. The severity of her black hat that sat low upon her head, almost covering her hair and the white cuffs and stock of her habit, contrasted with the soft modeling of her chin and hands. She crossed her knees and held the note before her, hesitating while the misery that gnawed at her heart gave her the impulse to tear it into shreds and toss it away. Nothing Nicolai had written while he waited for her could annul the impression his manner at parting had made upon her, and yet—the thoughts she had admitted in the rose garden that morning came trooping back to her mind—she had resolved to make peace and she had failed. At this moment, in her resentment, she was hating Nicolai again when really her hurt lay in the fact of her own failure. She told herself that she had not expected him to unbend at once. She had snubbed him at breakfast time, avoided his leave taking, broken his picture and, when he had wanted her later, she had been sufficiently elusive to ruffle his temper. She shrugged. Maybe after all he did have some real grievances, anyway she would believe so and try again for reconciliation. She broke the seal of the note and read:

Terry: Carter will explain why I am leaving in so great haste. I had supposed I would find you at home. You pouted last night and no doubt are off pouting somewhere now. You have never shown me this temper before. I sincerely trust that you will get the better of it at once.

I expect to be gone more than a week. When I return you must be ready for our trip to France. We are not going to give up yet.

N. K.

Not one tender word, not a regret. Terry sat looking out the window. He did not retract a word of the dreadful thing he had said last night but his "yet" left the impression that after France he would give up. Jealousy stabbed her as in the garden; perhaps already he had met the Louise who would succeed her. Why had he gone to Washington? She rose and walked about the room.

The agony of the night returned, her head ached and she pressed her fingers against her eyes to hold back the pain. Nicolai would divorce her. If after his threat of last night, after all he had seen that she suffered, he could leave her for so long without a tender word of regret, he could go on to greater cruelty. Loneliness and a very nausea of despair rolled over her and for the first time since her marriage she longed intensely for her mother, someone who loved her for herself, someone to hold to while the realization of Nicolai's purpose cut into her.

She pulled off her hat and ran her fingers through the hair that was flattened on her forehead. She was tired—too tired today to struggle. She leaned against the wall and gazed with unseeing, tear-dulled eyes at the floor. She could do nothing to combat Nicolai. The world was his; he would know how to divorce her. She might better stop fighting before she began.

Standing there, numb, tearless, her thoughts slackened to a dull round of words that nagged her aching head, words like Nicolai, Josephine. A son for Nicolai. Divorce from Nicolai. Failure the only sin. I have failed. I am failing . . . I have failed . . .

There was no elastic in her mind at the moment. The illness of defeat ran over her and a trembling began in her knees, her elbows and her ankles. She went slowly to the window seat where Nicolai's note lay open and sat looking at the vigor and almost illegible blackness of his writing that, like his hand or his voice, was part of his fascinating dearness to her. Through the numbness and confusion of her senses she was half conscious of some-

one calling her from the hall, but not until Clara MacRae knocked and opened the door was she aware that she had been crying a soft hoo-oo as she came up the stairs.

"Lena told me you were in your room; so I came right up. Didn't you hear me? I'm on my way home and at two I have to be off on a case, but if you invite me and if you have luncheon rather early I can stay today."

Terry went to her and offered both hands in welcome. Her impulse was to creep into Clara's arms as on that November day a year ago, and weep out her grief there, but she heard herself saying with an effort to keep the tears from her voice, "Of course you're invited. I do want you. Nicolai has gone away."

"He has!" Clara laughed with much-ado-about-nothing making mockery in her tone. "And you are weeping for your lost love? Your face is a tragedy. What's up?"

She was taking off her shapeless gray steamer coat and Terry, who had gone to her dressing table to pat and pull her hair to rights, saw in her mirror the too-short gingham dress, the stretch of light stocking above her practical boot—a peasant figure beside the reflected slimness of her own fashionable outline, and she knew that she would not tell Clara her trouble. There had been a time when she was the stranger, on trial in Clara's mind and suppliant for her friendship. Now she was, in their little world, the established one, the sovereign; pride of position would keep her silent.

She said, "Nothing," and smiled at Clara, who was studying her reflection inquiringly. To erase the traces of her emotional stress she rubbed her cheeks briskly with a chamois and put cologne on her eyebrows and lips.

"You're going to Lyda's to tea this afternoon, I know. I'm not invited this time. It's for you plutocrats only."

"It's to welcome them home."

Terry went to the house telephone and called the kitchen. When she had given her orders for luncheon

she continued, turning back to Clara, "They'll have lots to tell."

She stood with her back to the light to avoid Clara's scrutiny and gazed with affection at the erect figure on the end of the chaise longue.

"You look rather off, Terry. What's wrong? I never saw your eyes so heavy."

"Nothing serious." Terry laid her fingers over her heavy eyes for a moment. How could she tell anybody what was wrong! How say, "My eyes are heavy because I'm sick; I'm sick because my heart is dying. Nicolai intends to divorce me." Yet the time would come when the world must be told and she would have to endure pity and patronage. She clenched her hands and shoved them into the pockets of her riding coat. She wanted to stop thinking, but her thought went on to the accompaniment of Clara's voice about somebody who was in trouble. "Poor boy," she was saying. "Such things should not be. Something must be done." What was Clara talking about? Terry had missed it. "And for weeks this summer they lived on cereals and potatoes rather than go into debt for food. He's in debt as it is to the bank. Not much, but bad enough."

Terry was struggling to find out from her own immediate memory of sound who it was that a little debt and hunger made so tragic. Debt and hunger—hate and divorce. Poverty. Disgrace. She remembered Dr. Field standing in the path. It was he! Debt and hunger were his; hers, hate and disgrace. "You're talking about Dr. Field," she said aloud, as if she had but just traced the truth to earth.

"Why yes, Dr. Field. I told you in the beginning."

"I saw him this morning in the woods."

"You did? In the woods? That is where he was! His mother was worried. He went out and he had not returned when I left, but I saw that she wanted to be alone when he came. I had done all I could."

Clara was walking the floor, her finger on her lip. "They never gave me a hint of this before. I didn't know it was so bad. Something must be done."

Terry thought, "I must keep my mind on Dr. Field. . . . Why can't I concentrate on Dr. Field? He's in debt, hungry, his mother is sick. I want to think about him."

"I offered to help him," she said to Clara. "I was on Melody. I knew he was in despair and I dismounted; I even gave him my hand, and I begged him to let me be his friend."

"You did?" Why should Clara's voice have that wondering tone? Why should she look so? "You did?"

"I did. I was sincere. He stood away from me. He was cold and aloof."

"But of course. His pride. How could he take help from a little thing like you? A man like that."

"Then why did you seem so surprised when I told you?"

"Because his mother says he has a plan in which he wants to interest Mr. Karanoff. He may come here to see you. You offered to help him. I'm glad of that. I'm glad."

As they sat at luncheon Clara talked on about Dr. Field, oblivious to evidence of the burden that was pressing like a stone on Terry's heart. "He has a few loyal families, people who have learned they can trust him, but a few don't support his home and an office. It's his youth and Bennig's enmity. I shouldn't speak so of Bennig, I nurse for him. It's to you I'm talking, remember that."

"Of course . . ."

"I heard that you were done with Bennig and had dismissed him."

"Nicolai did. He was in a towering rage against him a few weeks ago and called him a drunken sot. He'll never trust him again."

"If only Nicolai would have Dr. Field! Can't you do that, Terry? Influence Nicolai?"

"I?" She put her elbow on the table and rested her head on her hand.

Clara's eyebrows drew down in a frown of annoyance. "You? Certainly. You could turn the tide for him if you would."

"I? Turn the tide—for Dr. Field, you mean?"

"Certainly! You could make him. Get sick and call for him and see. Talk about it. Advertise him. He is really a very skillful doctor, Terry. In surgery he's a marvel. I'm used to Bennig's rough clumsiness. Dr. Field is gentle, but he works straight through without fussing. And in diagnosis, because he's young and has all his reputation to make he is careful, he gets results. I'm for him. I'd have him for myself and surely I ought to know."

Terry's effort to follow Clara, to keep her mind on Dr. Field's trouble, helped her and she tried to eat the food Carter served her as he hovered about her chair with anxious concern for her wants, but she was glad, when Clara left, that there was no further need of pretense.

She went to her room and closed the door, then stripped off her riding habit that was like a weight on her throbbing body. Lowering the shades she went to Nicolai's bed, dragged back the heavy embroidered cover and crept in as she would creep into his arms, and put her face down into his pillow.

All that was best and dearest in Nicolai seemed to be with her then. With part of himself he loved her truly, of that she was sure; in his rude way he was asking her to understand that life was greater than love and it was for life that he hungered. She wanted to tell him that she did understand; that she would make an effort to believe as he believed about reincarnation. After all it was as reasonable as any belief—why should she not

accept it if, to Nicolai, who was brilliant, logical, wise, it was the truth. He then—she admitted it—was Napoleon, in the grip of the thing called fate, that carried him, perhaps unwillingly, along a course not of his own choosing. In her he saw Josephine, a dear obstacle; a beloved failure. Perhaps her lot was for tears and a broken heart. If that was so, why did not Nicolai look ahead to the fate of these two? Napoleon had gone on triumphant for a time but defeated, more heart broken than Josephine because he must have been conscious of his cruelty to her. In the end there had been no young emperor of Napoleon's blood. A sentence from the book of history she had read in the study at midnight stood out in vivid lettering in her memory: *After all, it was Josephine's children who were the heirs of Napoleon.* Not his son by Louise, but her Eugene and Hortense . . . Why didn't Nicolai remember that? What was he going to gain if history was really repeating itself in him?

That question was not difficult to answer. He accepted just so much of that similar fate and no more. He was not expecting events to run identically; he was merely seeing tremendous significance, deep import, in the likeness so far.

Perhaps he was right. She circled his pillow with her bare arms and pressed her face deeper into its softness as she would press it above Nicolai's heart while long sobbing breaths dragged at her throat. Her chest felt pressed upon by a weight that would not lift until, hot and relieving, the tears ran down into the pillow.

It was good to cry alone, abandoned to grief. The sting of salt in her hot eyes was not unwelcome and the violence of her sobs quickened the blood in her veins. As her cold, sick little body relaxed she knew that she would sleep and she drifted down, down into the shadowy depths of oblivion still clinging to Nicolai's pillow with love, with prayer for his mercy, in her thought.

Her sleep was deep and dreamless but the alarm clock

in her nerves, that had been set for the hour of Lyda's tea, brought her back too quickly to consciousness, and when she remembered the reality to which she had returned she longed for oblivion again. But oblivion did not return; she was young as the sapling hazel wand; she had been bent to the breaking point, but her hours of rest had restored her and with an upward sweep of elastic fiber she righted herself. She lay in bed that memorable day looking about the room, and immediately her thought went on from the point at which it had left off, but because she was renewed by rest there was resistance in her mind that was more reasonable, more like herself, than her crushed acceptance of Nicolai's delusions.

She could not believe herself the reincarnated Josephine. All the humor and logic of her naturally happy heart refuted the idea. She was Terry; new to this world; as innocent, until now, of searing experience as a vegetable, and free as air to make her own life. She had been bred to believe that success was hers for the taking and she could not supinely submit to the manacles of fate. Nicolai didn't either. He was aggressively following his destiny while he saw for her a passive rôle. She couldn't be passive and she knew that if she lived up to her own ideal, if she were a *Rosalind,* whom of all types of woman she most admired, she would ride the tricky old world as she would ride a capricious hunter and make it submit to her rein. So far she had made it come right for her. She had reason to feel pride and to believe that she could continue to wrest success for herself from what seemed a hopeless scramble of circumstances.

She threw back the covering of her bed and sat up. Somehow she would find a road through her difficulties, but she would not find it in tears; she must go out and live every minute to the brim.

This progression of thought she was to remember forever. The details of her dressing and her drive to Lyda's were lost. She was at Lyda's tea. She was late and she

paused in the doorway of the Wayne living room for a moment upon entering. The scene before her had startled her into remembering, because she had never before seen "nice" women smoke, and all the returned travelers who were seated about the tea table and fire in the sunlit room were smoking cigarettes. They greeted her shrilly. Lyda waved a teacup and Terry's shocked countenance called forth delighted laughter. Someone ran to her and dragged her into the room; her name was shouted and in the din she heard Lyda shrieking, "We all take rum in our tea now, Terry. Are you going to stop with lemon?"

She accepted the rum and tea mixture that was put in her hands; she drank it while the others continued smoking and all talked at once to her about the life in Rome, the life in Vienna. Out of the confusion she began to glean the fact that this party of adventurers had taken on European ways and given them American interpretation. These girls whom Terry had looked upon with quiet admiration for the advantages of their Eastern school life, had been out in the world gathering sophistication, and this was the fruit of their quest.

The rum warmed Terry and set her bruised nerves to tingling. She accepted a cigarette and even though she choked miserably and was laughed at, she felt an exhilaration as a result of it, that, added to the whole experience, was almost an intoxication. When the girls began, in the hushed voices peculiar to worshipers, to tell her about their old school friend, a young American princess who had entertained them at her villa near Rome, she was profoundly impressed. "It was on the terrace after tea," Mary Rich told her, "that she called my attention to her little boys playing on the lawn with their nurse. And she said, with the most adorable smile, Terry, it would have thrilled you, 'The older boy is my husband's. He is very serious and sweet, but the little one is my darling. He is Count Caroli's son.' " Mary had closed her eyes and drawn a long sighing breath as she finished. "She was

wonderful! Courage like that, the courage of her conviction, and her poise . . ."

"Do you mean—" Terry demanded unequivocal statement of the fact—"that she told you . . .?"

"Yes," Mary interrupted her. "She did. She said it the way you would say—'Storm is Niki's horse—but Melody . . . is . . . mine!' "

Terry had gone out from that house, after three cups of tea with rum, in the most reckless mood she had ever experienced. From the depths of physical and mental weariness she had been swept upward, by the chatter of the foolish virgins, to dizzy heights. With gay bravado, which she understood was partly the excitement of being at home once more, the returned travelers had preached a gospel of freedom that had emancipated her from the sense of oppression she had been suffering. She felt that nothing on earth would ever daunt her again. She had found a new armor from which the darts of Nicolai's cruelty would glance without leaving so much as a dent. Her senses sang, her eyes shone, she trod air, not the cushion of her carpet, inches deep, when she reached her room, and by the time she was dressed for dinner her radiance had deepened. She put on one of her loveliest gowns of black lace; it was sleeveless and low and she entered the dining room with a quick light step announcing herself famished. To prove it to the astonished Carter, who was still solemn in memory of her luncheon behavior, she ate her dinner with an appetite that delighted the man and an appreciation that was reported to Emmanuel. She was an entirely different creature from the silent suffering girl of the luncheon table.

She pondered the announcement the girls had made, that the United States was too stupidly moral and that White Falls was to have an awakening, thanks to them; she talked to Carter irrepressibly about various European customs and when he answered, "as Mr. Karanoff would wish him to," monosyllabically, she said, "Please talk to

me, Carter, as if you were human. I want to know about Europe as seen from the inside." But however human Carter might be, he was much too well trained to depart from the ethics of his calling and he was relieved when, during the salad course, Lena announced that Dr. Field was waiting for Mrs. Karanoff in the drawing-room.

Terry rose eagerly and gave hurried directions to Carter to serve dessert for two and to open a bottle of kümmel.

"I'll bring him out right away," she finished and—reproachfully—"*He'll* talk to me, Carter. *He'll* be pleasant and polite."

She went direct to Field with a manner so cordial and radiantly glowing that later, when he tried to describe it to his mother, Field was at loss for words. "It's that way she has of coming up close and lifting her face that . . . I can't explain it, but it gets me."

He was standing before a table when she entered the room, examining a piece of Chinese porcelain, but Terry led him toward the door after she had welcomed him. "You are going to have dessert and coffee with me," she said. "I have been alone through dinner and I was so hungry that it has been a long meal. The first day Nicolai is gone is always the hardest, and about the time I adjust myself to his absence he returns."

As they passed through the doorway to the dining room, walking slowly, Field looked about the great room. The balcony where he had sat on the night of Nicolai's dinner was not lighted, but its marble arches hung against the upper shadows like a festoon of dim old lace. Under the darkened chandelier the candle-lit dining table, reduced to its usual six feet, was banked with dahlias in all the shades in the scale of flame from palest yellow to warmest bronze and the crystal service of Italian amber completed a color effect that, on that cool October night, was like a cheering blaze.

"I haven't been in this room since the night of the big

dinner," Dr. Field said, "but I well remember how it looked. That was a year ago, was it not?"

"It will be a year tomorrow." She was observing that his memory for dates was better than Nicolai's. "And I assure you I remember it."

"You ought to. Your entrance here was a picture I shall never forget. Am I permitted to tell you how beautiful you were? You seemed to belong to the room. It is a palatial affair, isn't it?"

"It looked big to me that night. I remember my surprise when I stepped across the threshold and saw the balcony and all the faces turned toward me. It was like going out on the stage."

"This is the first time I knew you saw anybody besides Mr. Karanoff." He had seated Terry and he paused by his own chair to look down at her. "Your eyes were raised to his from the first moment and you went down the room as if he drew you."

Terry had lifted her little silver liqueur cup and she held it with the finger tips of both hands while she smiled in faint surprise at his last words.

"I should not have supposed you romantic, Dr. Field."

"I'm not romantic," he fibbed, and believed himself. His Anglo-Saxon ideal of manhood did not include the romantic. "I must admit that the idea was not original with me. My mother said it, but I know she is right. I saw you." He lifted his kümmel and pledged her with his eyes. But the smile faded from Terry's face. She looked into the little cup and slowly raised it to her lips. "You saw the truth," she said quietly. "I didn't see anybody else after that first moment. I don't now . . ."

Their eyes met, and in the silence Terry wondered why Dr. Field should look as if, in saying that, she had dealt an unkindness to him.

VII

NOT by a word nor look did Dr. Field make reference to their meeting in the woods so recently as that same morning, and Terry, giving him her interested attention, felt the remoteness of that experience.

The emotionally packed hours since the encounter seemed almost as many days to her and, though she had thought she had not gathered the full import of Clara's talk about Dr. Field at noon, she knew now as she watched him that she had grown to know him better in this one day than in all the year they had met in casual friendliness. Thought of him had gone down with her into the abyss of her despair and had risen with her to the crest of that wave of reaction that, blessedly, was still holding her aloof.

Dr. Field, too, it would appear, had recovered from his low mood of the morning and was hopeful once more. His manner was delightful, his smile quick, yet she saw the evidence of despair in his face. Young though she was, years younger than he, she felt the tender sympathy of maturity for injured youth and found herself inclined to smile ruefully at the regrettable combination in him of profound anxiety with healthy young manhood. He was lean, with hollows as definite as saber scars running from cheekbone to jawbone and his gray eyes were contracted with the habit of distressed thought, yet the tan of his skin, the contrasting white of teeth and the supple movements of his body were as youthful as her own. As they walked slowly from the dining room into Nicolai's study Terry resolved to make his business with her as easy for him as possible, and after they had agreed upon a fire and he had stooped to light it while she brought cigarettes, she had sunk into one corner of a deep divan, indicating as she did so the opposite end for him. He moved

to seat himself in obedience to her gesture but paused, while he drew his first deep breath of smoke, to glance about the study with a smile of pleasure for its mellow richness. "English, this room," he said. "That paneling looks a thousand years old."

"It is old. It was taken from a library in Surrey. There wasn't quite enough for this room and the decorator had to have it matched, so part was created in a Chicago studio. Can you tell which of it is old and which new?"

Field strolled around the walls peering at the panels, touching them with appreciative fingers. "No. I could never tell, but whoever did it is an artist at making worm holes." He turned to smile at her and she observed the gleam of his teeth. Clean, she thought, and heard him say, "Think of being an artist—having the soul of an artist and the dreams and visions, yet being obliged to earn a living by making worm holes in oak for a room you are never to see! We think love and death are the great tragedies of life, but they aren't. Love denied even to the point of heartbreak has enough romance to give compensation. I mean . . . it isn't all loss, but when a man has to kill his dreams . . . like this worm hole fellow. That is heartbreak without any romantic flavor."

"Oh, romantic flavor!" Terry's tone implied that that was small compensation. She added, "A man might agree with you, but I can't. I think heartbreak in love is the worst thing in the world."

"You do? I wonder." Field had strolled nearer her again and he paused to look at her before seating himself. She was remembering that he was experienced in both kinds of heartbreak. He had lost his young wife and he was desperate in his profession. Death was hopelessness. His Ruth was irrevocably gone from him, but his professional life seemed to her to brim with hope. How could he say—"I wonder"? Yet he had expressed the man's choice between two sorrows. Nicolai had made it clear that he would choose the heartbreak of love for her

rather than the denial of just part of his own ambition. She had thought Nicolai strange, abnormal even, foreign. But here was a clean young American echoing the same preference. Very different indeed were men and women, it seemed, more different than races.

Field sank down into the divan comfortably, but immediately leaned forward, rather uncomfortably she thought, and with an effort to look intent upon the gray ribbon of smoke from his cigarette that was being drawn toward the chimney, he sat a moment, quite evidently vibrant with the desire to speak of himself yet unable to begin.

It was a new experience for Terry to feel, with any man, that she must take the initiative, but with this young doctor she was impelled to assume responsibility for relief of his despair. In the morning she had dismounted and taken the matter of his trouble into her own hands; tonight she was feeling that by a painful inertia in himself he was asking her to lead him. He was waiting now for her to renew her offer of the morning, and generously, with the impulse of solicitude, she said, "I hope that you have come here to talk business with me. I have thought about you almost constantly since I met you in the woods this morning. I saw that you were troubled and because I was troubled too I wanted very much indeed to help you. I took you unawares, I know. You were not prepared for me but, now that you are here, won't you take me at my word without hesitation?"

It was an earnest little speech, gently made, and Field turned a look of gratitude to her, but for an appreciable moment he again watched the smoke of his cigarette.

"When I met you this morning," he began at last, slowly, "I was wondering, among other things, whether or not it was wise to go to Mr. Karanoff with a proposition that is on my mind. Mr. Karanoff is not easy to talk to . . . I . . ."

Terry laughed and Field smiled in quick response. "I

quite understand," she said. "It is difficult to talk with him unless he chooses to make it easy. I can understand your hesitation."

"We won't linger on that phase of my dilemma then, if you understand. You see the proposition I have to make is more to Mr. Karanoff's interest in dollars and cents than it is to me, but I am not quite sure I can convince him of that. It might look to him as though I were outlining a soft snap for myself . . . It would be a good thing for me just now, but it ought to be more to his advantage than mine in the end." He paused, but Terry was silent, waiting for him to continue.

"The fact is—" Field leaned back and for the first time since he had begun to talk he looked directly at Terry. She saw the contraction of the muscles of his jaws and knew that he was mustering courage to say a difficult thing. "I can't stay on in White Falls if I do not succeed with Mr. Karanoff."

Terry's eyebrows drew together upward in an expression of distress. "Is it as bad as that?" she asked. "Tell me all about it. I want to understand."

"You see, every young doctor has to struggle for a place in the scientific world. I thought I was prepared for that, but I wasn't. My life here in White Falls has been . . . hell." He hardly breathed the word, but it lacked nothing in emphasis. Terry was leaning toward him, her eyes dark with sympathy.

"What has made it so terrible?" she asked. "I don't understand why you should take it so hard. Don't lawyers and architects and doctors and all professional people, artists and writers too, have to go through that period?"

"Yes. They do. But it is hardest on doctors. Law is more or less a business and there are side lines for activity. A man can make any number of arrangements till he gets started. An artist is creating; a writer is creating; and that in itself is almost compensation, but

a doctor cannot advertise, cannot go into side issue work, cannot create. An architect can at least offer plans when bids are called for, but do you realize that a doctor can't offer help if his next door neighbor is ill?" He rose and began walking back and forth on the hearth rug. "I am not temperamentally a scientific man. I am a man of action. Surgery is action. I am ready now to go ahead and do the best possible work in gynæcology, but I can't go after it. People wait a long time before trusting their surgery to a young man, I find. You will hardly believe the cases I have diagnosed of women whose husbands work in Mr. Karanoff's mills. They need surgery, the kind I am eminently qualified to do. But did they let me care for them? They saved their money and went to Chicago and had it done there. Our hospitals here are not adequate. I can't blame the people . . ."

Ceasing abruptly he stooped before the fire, and with poker and tongs made a great stir among the logs. Terry looked down at his broad back and smiled ruefully. Poor chap! Of course he had suffered; what a splendid specimen of manhood he was to be bound by circumstances so galling. It might be that a man would lose in aggressiveness under enforced idleness.

He settled the fire to his satisfaction and when he rose his face was quieter. He lit another cigarette. "I am smoking too much," he said gloomily. "Things will turn some way soon. They can't stay as they are. I will stop smoking then for a while."

He caught the doubtful smile in Terry's eyes. "You don't believe me, but it's true. I can stop."

"I intend to begin."

"You do? I shall be sorry to see that."

"Why? Double standard?"

"No. Absolutely not. First of all, I believe in the single standard, but that has to do with morality and smoking isn't a matter of morals—or shouldn't be."

"That's a new idea, isn't it? How not?"

"It's only that women of a certain sort are the smokers in this country. We've associated it with immorality. They don't in Europe, of course."

"Then why did you say you'd be sorry to see me begin?"

"Oh, habit. Nerve slavery. I'm tired of being obliged to smoke. If things went right with me it would be a pleasant relief to quit. Of course I smoke a pipe usually. But not here. With you."

"Why not?" Terry leaned over the arm of the divan and opened Nicolai's tobacco cabinet. "See; pipes, everything! Do please be comfortable, with me." Again she was feeling that eager solicitude as she offered him the thing he seemed to want.

"No, thank you. This is perfect. I haven't been so comfortable, so at . . . rest since I can remember. I ask nothing more." His tone was convincing, yet something in it suggested to Terry further hospitality. She went to another cabinet and took out whisky and a syphon.

"I never drink," he said observing her, but Terry remembered that he had drunk the kümmel at dinner.

She poured the amber Bourbon into a glass engraved with a beautiful N, held it to the light to admire the letter and then filled it with soda water. She offered it to him with a smile of invitation and turned, still smiling at the little boy in him, when he accepted it and drank it quickly in the American way that Nicolai disliked, protesting again as he did so, that he never drank. "That is . . ." he qualified, and all but finished the glass.

Terry had not returned to her place on the divan but stood near him in shadow, leaning on the back of a chair. The more she observed this man the more sensible she became to the desperation beneath his charming manner. His smile, his attentiveness to her, were delightful, but they did not cloak the fox of despair that was gnawing at his very heart. That swift drink, the rapidly inhaled cigarettes, his restlessness. He moved constantly on the

hearth rug, held by the heat of the fire, but driven four ways in his torment. Never had she wanted more sincerely to make life right than for this young man. She felt herself to be the stronger of the two, but she thought it was Nicolai's power behind her like a fortress that gave her that advantage. That it was her character, her will, that were stronger than his did not occur to her. She had always been dominated. Mabel, Nicolai, Clara, ruled her by force of their stronger personalities; Bessie, by selfishness, until she had become grounded in her conception of herself as one born to yield. This young man, by appealing to her for help, for solace, gave her the right to lead him as strongly as she had been led. The unusual and tonic sensation added to the stimulation of her quickened generosity did not, however, entirely blind her to an element of advantage for her own case in his unhappiness.

"You must go on about our hospitals and your situation here," she reminded him while he emptied his glass and took it to the cabinet. "You say our hospitals are not adequate. I must have realized that when Jean was sick. There is no right provision for crippled children. Even I saw that."

"There is no provision for anything much. Certainly there is no place for me." Again the despair in his face and voice.

Terry leaned nearer him, her arms still crossed on the back of the chair where so often she had leaned above Nicolai. "Dr. Field, you must not think that. There is a place for you here, and you are needed. The people just don't realize, but they will find out. You said if Mr. Karanoff could not be persuaded to your plan that you would have to leave White Falls. That shall not be."

She stepped from the shadows and stood before him, her black-robed figure full in the firelight. "I want to assure you that you are not going to leave us. This city needs you even if it doesn't seem to appreciate you. While you have talked I have been running over the

doctors here, in my mind. They are none of them first-class men like you. Their virtue is that they are older and more experienced and that they have control at the hospital. Isn't that true?"

"Yes. Exactly. But if I am to wait until I am old and have control at the hospital I will be a gibbering idiot from slow starvation."

"No, you won't. The right thing shall be done. Don't even consider leaving here; I have some money of my own. I can lend it to you indefinitely. I will tonight."

Impulsively Field took her clasped hands in both of his own. "Oh, don't!" he said, giving them a vigorous little shake. "Please! I didn't come here to borrow your money. You must believe that I did not." He was scowling at her with the earnestness of his avowal, but he kept her hands in his.

"Of course you didn't," Terry cried, lifting her face to him. "I know you didn't, but I think you are a good investment. I would gamble on you, knowing I'd win. Nothing could be more certain. I want to keep you here as a favor to White Falls." She took her hands from his clasp and turning looked down into the fire. "Oh, why," she sighed, "should we make so much fuss about money? The mine and thine of it. Nicolai has made his because the quirk in his brain happened to give him that talent. Your talent is medicine; mine is dancing. Is your skill less valuable than Nicolai's paper and lumber? It isn't. I must be a socialist, I feel the inequality of the rewards so keenly. Once given brains, the power to think, the remuneration should be more even. Let's be sensible, you and I. Let's not let our relations be a matter of price. I understand your value, and for you to pretend you can live without money is nonsense. You can't. Very well, let me be your banker until you have your start. Let me finance a laboratory where you can experiment with germs and things . . ." Her animated face was alight with the earnestness of

her desire to help him; her flushed cheeks and crimson lips glowed toward him. She was lovely there in the firelight comforting him. A throb of gratitude rose in his throat. What a woman to have for a friend, this vital young thing in her disconcerting piece-of-a-gown. Her bare arms and shoulders held his eyes, as his memory, operating in response to a half-realized groping, pronounced the name he had been seeking while they talked of other things. Bouguereau! It was Bouguereau who had painted like that—the human skin, rose tinted, satin textured, firm.

Terry saw his eyes leap with the light of an admiration so eloquent in its frankness that it checked her speech. For a breathless moment she received his look, her lips parted, while she swayed back from him.

"You . . ." he began, and stopped. "You are so beautiful . . . in your kindness."

She drew a deep breath of relief. It was gratitude, only the light of gratitude he had been giving her in that moment. With a confused little murmur that accepted and dismissed his thanks, she found the lost thread of the thought she had been intent upon. "I was going to say that we must sit down and go back to your plan. The one you want to outline to Nicolai. I promise not to interrupt."

"It's just this . . ." He sank into his place the divan's length from her but leaned forward, elbows on knees and passed both hands over his face. "I find, to my surprise, that of all the new improvements and additions at the mills Mr. Karanoff has not put in a medical department. He has no way of handling a possible accident or sudden illness except by sending for a doctor or an ambulance. He hasn't even a room where a sick man can lie down. I was sent for not long ago, when one of the operatives had lost a finger. The man was lying on a pile of coats in a lavatory and the men had wrapped his hand in their grimy handkerchiefs. I had to kneel

beside him on the floor to work. The next day the superintendent took me through the whole business and I questioned him. I find that every day men go home ill or there are accidents and they have to be taken to a doctor's office. I think Mr. Karanoff can have no idea how much valuable time is lost that way. A man who rings out and goes home usually stays away the rest of the day, while, if he were treated there at the mills, he would be fit in an hour or so probably. Sometimes a very simple illness begins with a violent pain. Sometimes an accident that is almost painless is very bloody and must be cared for at once. You can see that if a doctor, in charge of a hospital room, were present to give relief, many a man would be saved part of a day's wages and Mr. Karanoff would not lose the time. The superintendent says his greatest difficulty is in getting operatives. They never have enough skilled workmen, yet there is no equipment for saving the men who are employed."

"How much of an equipment would be required?" Terry asked. "How extensive would it have to be?"

"One room for a small office, and an operating room, sanitary, and furnished with sterilizing outfit, table and so forth. Just the furnishings of any doctor's office. Of course that is not the ideal thing. There ought to be a hospital for the mill workers and their families, a children's ward, an obstetrical ward and a surgery. I should hope the work would grow to that, but I am surprised that Mr. Karanoff has not seen the advantages to himself of such an arrangement."

"I can explain it," Terry said thoughtfully. "He appointed Dr. Bennig the mills' surgeon and he has left it to him. Nicolai would be generous in such things, but Dr. Bennig has never suggested it and Nicolai has trusted him until now. He is quite done with him, though, since they had a disagreement recently."

"Really? Is that true? I had heard so, but I was not sure."

"Yes, it is true and I am glad. I like your plan. I hope it can be managed, but Nicolai would have to be convinced either that such a department was to his advantage or else he would have to learn to trust you as he has trusted Dr. Bennig. If he thought the plan sentimental he would despise it. He hates the welfare talk. He thinks workmen are better off if they are not fussed over by philanthropists. He says he respects them too much to turn his mills into a nursery for them. But if he trusted you he would give you a free hand, that is what I would want for you, his confidence. I think . . . You will forgive me if I tell you that you must go to him believing in yourself and not the least abashed by the fact that he may think it more to your own advantage than his. Don't let him have any hint that you doubt any detail of it. You see . . . I say this because I know him."

"You are the very soul of kindness to advise me at all."

"When Nicolai comes home you must be ready with your facts and figures. I will telephone Charlie in the morning to get you the information you want. But really . . . even though you think it looks like a soft snap for you I can't see what particular benefit there is for you in the plan. You might be there days without having any cases at all."

"I wouldn't be there all the time. I would have certain hours there, a private telephone wire to my office and home, and a woman assistant who could give first aid till I arrived if I happened not to be there. You see, as things are with me now, I could be there nearly all the time. I would hope, of course, so to win the confidence of the men that I would get their family practice, their surgery and obstetrics. I could soon build up a practice from such a beginning."

Before he left Dr. Field had said goodbye and thanked her in a way that sounded as if they never were to meet again, so that, chiding him, she suggested that they make

their parting merely a good night. "I shall see you tomorrow," she said. "I am coming to your office."

Until she heard the words she had not known she meant to say them. Once said, however, the idea behind them hardened into determination. She would put her own case in his hands.

"To my office? But why?"

Terry raised quizzical eyebrows. "What is your office for? Consultation?"

Field tapped the brim of his hat and looked stonily before him. "Mrs. Karanoff. Your ideas about . . . socialism that you outlined a while ago you remember . . . Don't speak of that further. If I must leave White Falls I can go into institutional work you know, an insane hospital, for instance."

"An insane hospital . . ." Terry looked her amused wonder. "And you prefer an insane hospital to financial backing from me? That is your return of friendship . . ."

He had left her with laughter sparkling between them, but hardly had the door closed on him than Terry felt that it had closed on her laughter too. She was left alone and lonely in the stillness and she hesitated at the foot of the stairs, reluctant to go to bed while the study fire glowed warmly on the scene of this new and strange adventure into friendship.

She went back to the divan, cuddling her bare arms and shoulders among the cushions for warmth and lay very still listening to the hiss and snapping of the burning logs.

Yes, it was a strange friendship; perhaps it would be a beautiful friendship if she could help him with Nicolai. . . . If she could help him to a place of security even while her own security was threatened with disaster. . . . To have done that for him or anyone as deserving as he, would be good to remember.

She dreamed lightly and the fleeting shadows of a

dimming consciousness flickered about her, delicate as the tint of firelight on the walls. But deep under the ripple of her surface dreams the drama of a dark prophecy was stirring.

Sinking wearily into ghostly memories of the long day, breathing softly the wraithlike fragrance of wood smoke, of cigarettes, the scenes of the cycle of the hours were re-enacted for her.

The details, the amenities of the evening began to drop away from whispering phantom shapes, and she beheld, emerging, the inchoate substances of premonition. Like an October leaf tossed into a sullen stream, she felt that she was headed into a current as dark before her as a subterranean river. She had been sailing in the somnolent sunshine; now, like the moment before the plunge into a tunnel, she was facing a blind journey.

How, where, why . . . she did not even ask. If the prophecy came from within herself the answers were within herself, but because every alarmed instinct was closing down on her in tightening inhibition against thought, she did not want to understand. She wanted cover from herself, from life . . .

Fully awake from her drowsing and tense with dread, she closed her physical and her spiritual eyes and turned her face deeper into the pillow.

She must go to Nicolai. From this new impending fate there was only Nicolai . . .

Never, never would she have believed that Nicolai with all the bristling armor of his vanity, his spiked obduracy, could stand as refuge for her against . . . She could not name it, she would not ask what. Again she refused to look into her own mind but starting up she jumped from the divan and went to Nicolai's writing table to send a telegram; seized pen and paper and wrote straight from her throbbing emotion. "I love you with all my heart and I want to be with you. May I come to Washington to tell you so?"

It did not occur to her to say, "I am coming to Washington to tell you so." She must have his permission . . .

As she put down the telephone receiver the tears of relief flowed on to her cheeks. It was all so easy, the sending of her message. Her body sank drooping with weariness. Already the loneliness was eased. Right here in this room, without moving from the comfort of the firelight, she could send her appeal to Nicolai. It would reach him at his Chicago hotel, and he would answer before going on. Surely, surely he would want her to come to him. Perhaps he would wait in Chicago; if he did, or if he would let her follow him, she could make him feel her love as he had never felt it before, because she would express it as she had never expressed it before.

Threatened with extinction, that love of hers grew like the shadows that the firelight cast on the wall. She sat at the writing table, breathing rapidly in her emotion, her face lifted, fresh tears on her cheeks, and watched the enormous shadow of a dahlia that trembled above the panelling.

On the table was the little flower in a slender vase. Her love was like that flower—a little thing in the fragile crystal of her heart until, touched by the flare of extinguishing fire, it had grown splendidly to gigantic size, exquisite, trembling, and great with giving.

VIII

TERRY'S waking thought a few hours later was that she must be ready to pack on a moment's notice for Washington, but before leaving she must explain to Charlie about Dr. Field and win Charlie's interest for him.

It did not seem possible that Nicolai, after their dreadful evening and cold parting, would not want her as

quickly as she could get to him. He would know with what darling, what happy, tender expressiveness she would love him. That one time when she had been in Washington with him, in his apartment at The Willard, had been better than their honeymoon and he had said so too. He would remember that time and want her. She lay still, loving him as she wanted him to love her, happy in the beautiful things of their marriage and forgetting the little disappointments. She had had disappointments with him from the very first, but she could forget them, she did forget them since they weighed so lightly against the happiness. She was ready even to forget the dreadful threat if he would show her that he regretted having made it.

She started up when Lena came into her room to tell her the Western Union was calling, and reached for the bedside telephone with trembling eagerness.

In the operator's impersonal, nasal sing-song she heard, "No-o. Sta-ay where you a-are. I may go on to Que-be-ec from Washington. Get rea-dy for Pa-ris. Signed Nic-o-lai."

Terry dropped back on her bed and sat as still as marble staring at nothing. The message set up no thought excitement, no protest, no tears. She stared and stared, feeling only a faintness as of hunger and the discomfort of the frosty cold against which her thin nightgown was nothing.

When Lena returned, solicitous, she rose and dressed mechanically, ate a small breakfast in absorbed silence and went quietly about the telephoning of the day.

After she had prepared Charlie for Dr. Field she sat listlessly gazing at the toe of her slipper. The radiant vivacity of the evening before had dropped from her as a festive wrap drops from the shoulders of a returned reveler. Not a light, not a smile, not a tripping step of that gay mood remained. She was numb again with the dullness of despair. She felt that she faced a doom

as real, a future for her as hopeless, as a sentenced man's. If there was one fact about Nicolai that admitted of no argument it was his inexorableness. She had known him a brief year, but it was long enough to teach her that pity had no place in his emotions and relentlessness was as much a part of his driving ambition as one sinewy finger is part of a pugilist's hand. He had made up his mind that he would have a son. He had patterned himself upon Napoleon and he would no more relinquish that purpose nor relent in love and pity than he would beg for a living. If he had admitted the thought of divorcing her to the extent of giving voice to it, then he would do it. If it broke his heart in the end, he nevertheless would travel the road that seemed to offer thoroughfare for his thwarted desire.

Though her realization of this had been keen in the hours of the night when he had first revealed his thought to her and had borne down upon her again at the luncheon table with Clara, it was not until his telegram that it had passed from an agonizing emotion with her, into a settled conviction. Nicolai would be free from her before spring if she did not fulfill his hope.

She bent her head on the hand that wore his wedding ring and closed her eyes. She remembered the experience of the afternoon before with thankfulness that Lyda had brought her a prescription for temporary surcease from her sorrow. She had been lifted above it once and she would be so lifted again. In her inexperience she did not know that the same mild prescription would not continue to accomplish the desired result. It had availed yesterday; it would help today. The company of carefree girls with their innocuous rum and cigarettes was an extremely light wind to be sure, but strong enough to blow her over the waters of life from the deep river of her despair to the laughing shallows.

She made a sorry grimace as she recalled her enthusiasm of the evening before. She had given Dr. Field

encouragement as if she did not know Nicolai cared not a snap of his strong fingers whether the men had medical care or not. He might easily be expected to care later, to care generously if his wish was granted, but not while he was smarting from the sharp rebuff fate had given him the past few months.

Terry went to her room. Her desk stood by a south window that was admitting a ray of sunshine. It touched her cheek as she sat with lowered eyes marking a piece of paper aimlessly. She must write to Nicolai and she must seem happy and affectionate. Whatever her fate she would face it resolutely, with the best that her love could give her of courage and calm. When Nicolai looked back upon this year he should have nothing to remember but her sweetness. And yet, when she had produced a letter that played true to this policy of her love, it sounded insincere, and rightly. She had been insincere when she wrote that she knew he would be "glad of her plan to consult Dr. Field." He wouldn't be glad at all and she knew it. He would doubtless have a fit of temper over it but since he had to be prepared it was perhaps best that he wreak his displeasure on somebody in Washington rather than on her. By the time he returned home he would be used to the idea.

It was quite within the logic of her fledgling philosophy to reach the positive conclusion that if she became deceptive in her way with him the blame lay on his soul not hers. She had dealt with him in sincerity and deepest faith, she had offered him virgin soil wherein to plant the garden of his love; if he had sown thistles, perhaps, being wise in the world, he would expect to harvest thistles.

Moods. Moods. Like shifting clouds in a troubled sky they all but obscured the one star of her night—that she loved Nicolai with all her heart and soul and must not fail him.

As a first step in one direction toward success she took up her pen and wrote a check for two hundred dollars payable to Dr. Field.

IX

DR. FIELD reached his office but a few minutes before Terry arrived, but he knew, the moment he saw her, that she had heard the news of his mother's illness.

He received her with a smile that broke irresistibly through the gravity of his demeanor, and as he seated her beside his desk in the consulting chair that faced the relentless light of a brooding fall afternoon his eyes took pleasant stock of her troubled beauty. Harassed though he was—perhaps because he was harassed—he noticed unforgettably the blended harmony of her costume, gray cloth and chinchilla, a chinchilla hat with something blue above eyes of the same deep heavenly shade.

His mother, he told her, had been seized with illness in the morning when she was alone with little Norris, but she had managed to get to the telephone and call for help. Her condition, though not alarming, was serious and would require care, and while he did not doubt her ultimate recovery he admitted that he was terribly worried. He knew he need not tell this one of his friends that he was desperately concerned over the expense that had leaped upon him when his defenses were lowest.

"I have had to get a nurse and put her on the case, a new woman in town. I never saw her before. It will be a long day before Mother can be about, I fear." He moved his shoulders nervously and passed his hand across his forehead.

"Can't you send for a relative?" Terry asked, with evident distress for him. "Surely someone would be glad to come."

"We have so few. My mother's sister is old; she lives in California. I could hardly send for her."

"No, hardly." Terry pondered the problem. "I could suggest a perfectly practical and right arrangement," she said firmly, "but you would not see it as I do. I could take both your mother and Norris to The Towers and care for them. It would do me good. I am lonely these days. There is so much I must struggle to forget."

He felt, at first, a flare of annoyance, but it passed and he smiled at her in appreciation. "That is a 'made tale up' to cajole me into letting you play Lady Bountiful. It is impossible to imagine you needing to forget anything."

"Did you leave me last night thinking that? Thinking I had no trouble?"

"Trouble and you don't speak the same language. You were everything . . . lovely to me last night. Not trouble."

"You are mistaken. I have come here today to tell you my trouble. I want your advice; I want to put my case in your hands."

He looked at her with quickly questioning eyes and saw that she was earnest, so earnest that the lovely color had faded from her cheeks. "You are not joking? You mean that?"

She nodded ever so slightly and lifted wet lashes in a plea for understanding.

Like a flash he knew. All White Falls had talked even before their marriage about the purpose behind Karanoff's sudden surrender to matrimony and recently he had heard unpleasant surmises from Clara. Yet somehow, because she was so young, so exquisitely fashioned for the delights of love rather than its ultimate flowering, he had not supposed Karanoff could care particularly. Not at once anyway. Certainly the man took his own desires seriously.

"Please forgive me for not believing you at first. I can

hardly tell you how little you look the part, either of sorrow or illness. Are you not well?"

She was taking off her gloves and as she smoothed them across her hand bag he bent the scrutiny of his narrowed gaze on her face, realizing as he did so that for the first time in his observation of her he was looking at her as a physician. She had held his attention always by such engrossing details as the contrast of black lashes on tinted cheeks, the modeling of a nose that—he had heard it said—distinguished her from the doll-like beauty of the usual pretty girl, but now he noticed her hurried respiration, the pallor, the feverish red of her lips—and smiled. Not even the quick beat of the pulse in her throat could deflect him from his conviction that a more radiantly normal young woman had ever existed. Pallor and quickened respiration of nervousness, nothing more; trip-hammer of a heart unused to confessional.

But she was brave in confessional. She began with a kind of pale courage and he helped her with adroit questioning that drew her story from her.

He watched her breathing grow quieter, the color return to her face, as she met his eyes and perceived that he was not the Harry Field she had sailed with, had danced with, had comforted last night by the fire, but an impersonality who had slipped the garments of his profession over the lineaments of youth. Focusing his mind on the pathological aspects of her case he had made her feel that he was agelessly scientific and she rewarded him with unselfconscious response, even to an explanation of the nature of Karanoff's obsession.

"Mr. Karanoff really does believe himself the reincarnated Napoleon! I had heard that. They say every man is insane on some one subject. It is amazing! So that is his."

"That is his." There was no criticism of Karanoff in her tone. No criticism of any sort touched her story. She had made it clear throughout that Nicolai was not

unreasonable, since he had told her before he married her of his ambition. As if that altered the facts!

After a pause during which they both were absorbed in their own thoughts, she said, "There is something else I ought to tell you. Your trouble and mine are strangely entangled as it happens. When I met you in the woods yesterday morning because I was sick with heartache I knew that you were too, and yet I did not dream we had so much in common. You see you are depending on Nicolai's acceptance of your plan for staying here. I encouraged you to think he would be favorably inclined, but I know today that I was wrong. I should not have encouraged you except that I couldn't go into this that I have told you today, while you were telling me your plan."

"I see."

"As long as Nicolai is unhappy about me, this way, he will be unhappy about everything. He can't be disappointed in one section of his brain and serene in the rest of it." She smiled as at the whim of a child. "He is in such a wretched state of fury at the fates right now that if you went to him with your plan he'd say sharp, sarcastic things about working men and their tough hides. Some such thing that would make you want to hit him, and he would see that you were angry and laugh at you. Then it would all be over."

"Mrs. Karanoff, if your husband divorced you he would undoubtedly settle a very large amount of money on you. You think so, don't you?"

He was hardly able to repress the fury that seized him. It was unthinkable that she should bear this, that she should resign herself to it.

"Yes. He already has done that. He probably would give me more . . . and exile to some . . . Malmaison." A trembling ran over her face and she caught her lip between cruel teeth.

"Then I should think you would ask for your release,

not fear it. Why, in God's name, do you want a husband like that?"

"Oh, don't . . . !"

No more had he asked her the question than he knew he had touched the spring that would loose her brimming emotions. Bravely, with courage that now he knew had cost her dearly, she had kept her recital unimpassioned, not from lack of feeling but because, only by repressing it, could she talk to him at all.

With the cry she half rose, dropping her clenched hands on his desk.

"Don't ask me that! I love him. I love him enough to forgive him. I love him enough to love him more, because I have to forgive him. If it makes him happier, I am willing to believe that he is Napoleon. Maybe he is. Just because we don't happen to think as he does, doesn't mean that he is wrong. But I don't have to reason about it. I don't need to. I love him. Isn't that enough?"

She had dropped back in her chair; her voice was husky; it pleaded with him, and her body, lifted tensely toward him, pleaded with him in a passion that left no room for consciousness of self. In her eyes was the light that no words could translate and the tears on her face were the star-shine of an inner glory.

"You think I ought to hate him. I did try to hate him," she went on. "I thought I had succeeded that first night. I saw my love dead. I saw it . . . with my own eyes . . . lying dead in the darkness. I have passed through every kind of pain in these two days, and the worst was trying to hate him. Dr. Field—" She stopped, again choked by the tears that caught in her throat, that drowned her eyes. "This thing of fate is as terrible . . . as terrible as death. I read the story of Josephine night before last and I despised her for weeping this way—the way I am crying now, and not ashamed. I thought her lack of pride almost worse than Napoleon's cruelty, and yet look at me. Where is my pride? How can we say that

I am not Josephine living again in a fate that is like . . . like chains upon me?"

She said no more; sank down, relaxed, her breath coming in quick sobs and long broken sighs; unmindful of her wet cheeks and his pitying eyes.

In the silence he heard himself swallow. This was what they meant when they talked about the love of women. The blindness of it; the godlike selflessness of it. This girl, this heaven-kissed, beautiful girl, with her talent and her youth and the money Karanoff could be made to give her, could be free of him. She could have the world at her feet and yet she chose—preferred, to stay with the selfish beast. By the operation of what law did women always give their deepest and best to simian brutes like Karanoff?

She was not primitive herself. She was the exquisite product of civilization, of physical preservation and intelligence. The care that had been given her vigorous rounded body, so lissom in its strength, so soft in outline, had not begun with her own life. She must be the flower of generations of fine lineaments. Race horses are not sired by plow horses; exquisite women surely could not spring from less delicate antecedents; and yet this girl whose face was sensitive and proud, both at once, could drink the dregs for a Karanoff! He gave it up. She ought to know better. She ought to despise herself. And some day she would. That day was near. This passion of defense was the last cry of her dying heart for him.

There were men . . . there were gentle men who would count slavery to her whims a very heaven. Karanoff—bah—he didn't know his luck, the damned big egoist.

It was not till Terry was ready to go that they noticed the soft, fine drizzle that was spotting the dust on the window pane.

Terry looked down into the street. She had not expected rain, nor had she observed the dark portent of lowering clouds that had gathered as they talked but, seeing them, she gave no evidence of vexation.

"I shall have to wait until the car comes for me," she said, and her voice, so beautiful in its minor treble, was trembling with weariness. She turned to Field and raised her misty eyes. Already he had reached for the telephone. "Ask for Carter and tell him. He always knows what I want."

She stood in the center of the dingy office, one hand stroking the fur that lay about her shoulders, and it seemed to Field that all the light had gone out of her face. He felt that for him it had gone out too. He could find no words with which to comfort her, and she had passed beyond the banality of encouraging him. She had made it clear to him that there was no hope for happiness for either of them through Nicolai so long as they both failed to make his ambition possible. He would be as scornful of Field, professionally, after this as he was of her.

Knowing that, Field had had to say—and the brevity of his conclusion had been expressive of the keenness of his own disappointment—"There's trouble, of course, but not with you." By her face he had known that she accepted his word as final and that it was doom to her. She was oblivious of his voice asking her to accept a chair, and when he touched her arm she looked at him questioningly.

"You must sit down," he said. "It may be half an hour or more before the car is here."

She took the chair he indicated, his largest and best, and sat gazing before her seemingly unconscious of his presence.

Dr. Field went back and forth from his office to his laboratory as he set his armamentarium to rights, but he missed nothing of her attitude nor expression. She was listless, lost in thought, and though her face was sad

she was tearless and unresisting, at least for the moment.

He knew her mind was not numbed by her disappointment, for her eyes moved about the room, unseeingly contracting and dilating with the pulse of her thought. He busied himself at his desk for a time, rising every few minutes to look from the window for her car, but finally he gave up his pretense of work and stood leaning against the window frame, one hand in his pocket, his eyes traveling from the street below to the woman who continued her meditation.

When he least expected it her gaze suddenly concentrated on him and she began to speak as if she had not for a moment excluded him from her thought.

"I wish you would make one promise to me, but I will have to ask you to make it in the dark."

"I'd promise you anything."

"It is just this. There may be a chance yet. I mean that when you tell your mother that I have been here I wish you would let her think that I am a hopeful case. That you are going to help me. I can't explain what I mean now, but . . ."

"Wait a minute," he interrupted earnestly. "I don't tell my mother such things as this! Anything you say is safe with me . . ."

"I know, I don't make myself clear. I want you to tell her I came. It would make her happy to know, wouldn't it?"

"She would be certain I had passed the turn in the road."

"Then tell her. Clara said if the town knew you were my physician it would help you. I am willing the town should know, not all about it—heaven forbid—but that I chose you in preference to France."

He turned an illumined look upon her, a look so eloquent of gratitude that she shook her head at him. "Why do you make such a fuss about my wanting to help you in your difficulties? Wouldn't you help me if you could?"

"Yes," he said, and his teeth shut on the word. "I would do anything in the world for you. Can you imagine how I feel now, that with all the opportunity you give me I stand here helpless, unable to suggest anything for you?"

Terry's quivering smile assured him of her understanding. "The thing I do appreciate is that you don't make a case of surgery for yourself whether there is reason for it or not. You see, I realize that I was right in trusting you."

He had not thought of it that way. The temptation had come to him early in their consultation, but he had hardly been conscious of dismissing it; it had dropped from his mind by the very weight of its baseness. And now he could only look at her in silence. How well she understood him! With her, he was his best. He had thought last night it was the liqueur, the luxurious room and fire, as well as herself. Today in his dim and dreary office with the drizzling rain on the window he knew it was her sympathetic and generous spirit illumining the qualities in himself that were best.

Her car had arrived. As John turned in the street below, she rose and fastened her fur about her. In her hand she held a small folded paper which, turning, she laid on his desk. He did not know from whence she had extracted it. He had not seen her open her bag since she had arrived but he knew it was a check. She was very business-like in her manner, if not in her methods, as she said, "That is my retaining fee. I want to be free to call you whenever I please. Will you come?"

"You know I will."

"There are times when I can't bear this."

She had reached the door. He was beside her and they went down stairs together. He had caught up an old umbrella as they passed through his reception room; as he took her across the sidewalk to the car he held it carefully over her and let the rain fall on his own bare head.

X

THE hall clock was chiming the quarter after five when Terry entered the house. It was cold and dark and the penetrating dampness chilled her so that she shivered and drew her shoulders into her inadequate fur. She was so tired that though her desire was to get to her room as quickly as possible, she dropped down in a hall chair and sat looking up at Carter. "Carter," she said, "do you know what kind of rum they put in tea?"

"Rum?" Carter echoed, mildly incredulous, "in tea? I never heard . . ."

"Oh, yes!" Impatience was unusual with Terry, "the kind of rum they use in France, in Europe everywhere. What kind is it?"

Carter's mouth drew down into a firm narrow line. "I have never served rum in tea. Never! It wasn't done when I was in France or England either."

"Well, it's done now, and I want some, very badly. Please ask Emmanuel if he knows and have him fix the tea tray and send it to my room."

Carter hesitated. She knew he would manage the combination of tea and rum as he saw fit; no use insisting further. He must surely see that she was weighted by trouble again.

"Is there anything else, besides tea? A fire in your room, perhaps?"

Terry looked up with quick gratitude. "Yes, I would like a fire. It is cold here." She shivered again.

"Oscar started the furnace fire as soon as it turned cold, but the heat is just beginning to come up now. The change was sudden. Might I suggest . . ."

"Yes . . ."

"That I send Lena to help you change, and have her

take you some of the kümmel? Then as soon as ever Emmanuel can have the tea tray ready, I will bring it. The kümmel will warm you now."

"That will do, if Emmanuel doesn't know the kind of rum I mean, but I prefer that. It isn't the same as the kümmel. There is something very special about it."

She began a weary ascent of the great staircase. Carter was a dear, but stubborn. Because he didn't know about the rum, he supposed it improper or something, but she was too tired to fuss about it.

Lena, coming up the service stairs, arrived almost as soon as Terry. She brought, not the generous two fingers of kümmel Nicolai would have taken, but a bottle of Allasch and a silver cup which she set on a small table that she wheeled to the fireside. She knelt on the hearth and lit the fire and Terry, sinking into a small upholstered chair, watched the first flames eat their way up through the kindling to the slender birch logs that were to give their white bodies for her comfort. She thought of the virgin birches down near the lake, beaten upon by the cold rain. It would be a long, long winter for them alone down there in the storms and winds, and for her too up above them in the big house, alone with her fear and her grief.

As Lena moved the table to her side and took the pin from her hat, she suggested a hot bath and tea in bed, and Terry gratefully acquiesced. She sipped her liqueur to the sound of running water in her bathroom, that sent out the pleasant suggestion of relaxing heat.

When she emerged from her dressing room, refreshed and fragrant in her lace nightgown, she saw that the tea tray had arrived and was waiting by her bed, where Lena turned back the covers and piled the pillows to her liking. It was bliss exquisite to be so perfectly served; every fiber of her being delighted in the ordered, silent movements about her that were for her comfort and happiness. Nicolai had been lavishly provident for her always, or

almost always. The times when she had felt the sting of his temper she had forgiven so utterly that they had ceased to be grievances.

She thought of their honeymoon and, looking about the charming room, remembered their first breakfast after they had returned to The Towers, when Nicolai had told Carter, and she had overheard the order, that hereafter her word was to be law with the servants, her comfort their first thought, her care their heaviest responsibility; and he had raised their wages all round that she might feel free to call upon them for whatever services she desired. All his thought had been for her then . . . He did love her even though he had married her for another purpose. And he loved her now—she knew he did—but not in the usual way, not with sentiment that absolved her from the consequences of her own failures toward him. He didn't make a doll of her.

She poured her tea, and lifting a slice of the lemon Carter had provided on the tines of the slender lemon fork, she regarded it with distaste. It was not sufficient for her need today, and dropping it back on the plate, she reached determinedly for the doppel-kümmel which she poured liberally into her cup. There was no sense in suffering this ache of despair when the means to alleviate it was within her reach. She must find again the carefree mood of Lyda's tea. For one thing, it would help her to get away from the thought that she had had in Dr. Field's office when she had weighed her only chance of success against the penalty of Nicolai's obsession. She wanted to be ashamed of that thought, but, peculiarly, she was not ashamed of it. It was strange that she could stand off from herself as from a wilful child, and say, "You should be ashamed of yourself," when the rebellious spirit within her was answering fearlessly, "But I am not ashamed, I am proud to think I have the courage to face it." The idea would never have come to her, but for that story about the American princess. All her friends there at

Lyda's tea were extolling the princess for her courage and honesty. She, of them all, was the only one who had seemed to feel any sense of shock, and it had marked her as provincial; "too utterly American" the girls had branded her. One thing was certain. She was too utterly American not to learn the lessons life thrust upon her. She not only had the capacity to grasp ideas, but to use them . . .

She closed her eyes and held them so while her heart rose sicklily into her throat and sank again. When her lids lifted she looked at the black and white "wash" of Nicolai that dominated the gold toilet things on her dressing table. It was a striking piece of work, for the living Nicolai was so drawn in black and white that the portrait lost nothing by its lack of warmer tints. His heavy-lidded griffon's eyes looked across at her with steady scrutiny that she met as she would meet his look if he walked in upon her—with all her love and the throbbing nerves of her anxiety bared in her tremulous face.

She lifted the tea tray to her bedside table and sat forward, her arms wrapped about her knees, while she concentrated her thought on him. If by any chance he should return from Washington so soon, as of course he could not, she would find that he, the aggressor, had recovered less from their break than she. It was probable that his fierce rebellion against life's latest irony would still hold him aloof from her. She could easily imagine how he would stand back from her and narrow his eyes accusingly while he made thorough work of reproving her for taking her case to Field when he had planned otherwise.

And what tonight would be her reaction to such an attitude on his part? Rebellion—a match for his? Resentment? No, neither of these. She had gone beyond the petty backbitings of the lovers' quarrel.

Would she remind him, as she was constantly reminded by some inner voice, that it was Josephine's children who,

after all, were heirs of Napoleon? "If we are to relive the tragedy of their lives, why not relive it completely? Will you accept my child as your heir, as Napoleon was forced by the fates to do?"

She smiled faintly as she thought what Nicolai's rage would be in response to such a question from her. He would remind her, in turn, that Louise and the dauphin had come before that hopelessness. Yet, was that an argument? Despite Louise and the dauphin, Josephine's children had been Napoleon's heirs. If one believed at all, why not profit by that belief? She could profit by it. Once Nicolai had discarded her, had gone through the heart-searing futile program, there would be no chance for them ever to be together again, while if she, made wise by that lesson of history, took matters into her own hands now, she would save not only herself from the very crucifixion of her love, but she would save Nicolai from the remorse, the pain, he must suffer if he did the thing that now his blind stubbornness was forcing him to do.

"'It is not,'" she remembered, quoting, "'love that counts so much in the scheme of things, as what we do with our love.'" She saw clearly the truth of that, and its application to her own case.

Love must be made to count. Nicolai wanted his love to count; that was the saving grace of his intention toward her. She wanted her love to count. The mere fact of love was not enough; love must be made to yield dividends. These distinctions were subtle, not easily discerned, but the more she pondered them the surer they made her course.

She could see now, looking back, why Mabel had lived clear-eyed in circumstances that Terry in her inexperience had doubted, painfully, at times. Mabel knew, as all successful people knew, that one must make the best of the conditions imposed by life and pay in whatever coin is demanded. One could not choose . . .

Looking steadily, regretfully, into the eyes that re-

garded her from the dressing table she thought these things, and believed them.

Youth is often confused and unaware of its confusion, feeling only a discomfort which demands the relief of action. The deeper the confusion, the greater the need for aggressive means to end it.

Terry, cheeks aflame, hands like ice, trembling through all her body, but with a steady purpose, reached for her mules. Slipping her feet into them she went into her dressing room and, after throwing the lace and beribboned frailty of a negligée about her, opened the mirror-panel that concealed her safe. She worked at the combination and her agitation made her fingers inaccurate, but at last it opened and she began pulling out the contents. There was first a leather jewel box monogrammed in gold, then a bulging envelope tied with blue tape, some loose papers, another jewel case, and a small tin box of securities. Making a bag of her nightgown skirt she carried them into her room. She would soon know what she had to offer. Certainly not these jewels. Jewels and memories! She opened the leather box and took out boxes. Pearls—a rope, Nicolai's engagement gift. He had written on the card, "Pearls to Terry, a pearl secure in the fastnesses of my heart." That was touchingly romantic of Nicolai. And this diamond stomacher . . . foolish name for a plaque! Blazing, useless, gorgeous thing . . . She closed the case. Lying loose in a tray were rings, pins, bracelets—every one a memory, each memory a pain of remembered happiness. She brushed them aside. Now for the securities. Her hands trembled as she reached into a table drawer for her scissors. Studying the dates of the coupons, she clipped them carefully and piled them in a little heap on the lid of her jewel box. "These," she whispered, "I shall cash. There must be no transfer of paper between us."

The beginning of a hospital; the establishment of a practice and the support of a man whom White Falls

needed, were all in these bits of coupons. Surely the words "for the greater good" applied to this strange entangled case. Dr. Field's desires of life, his ideals were the most praiseworthy. He did not ask ignoble things. He was wrapped about now by circumstances, in the very grave-clothes of failure, yet he was eager to work, once given opportunity. He was grave; sincere. The only thing was that, according to Clara, he had the quixotic ideas of morality that she talked about and Nicolai ridiculed. "You Americans all talk like plaster saints, but you behave like the rest of us. Posing is the best thing you do over here, and how you do love a pedestal!"

Again Nicolai was right. She was remembering—"I never drink . . ." and the long drink that had disappeared.

Someone knocked. Terry jumped, startled from her tense absorption.

It was Lena to say dinner would be served whenever she was ready. Would she dine here in her room or down stairs?

"I don't want anything," Terry cried impatiently and waved her away. Always the fuss of eating! "Have a tray ready, but don't send it up unless I ring. I want to be alone."

Lena went, but hardly had Terry recovered from the interruption till Carter knocked and opened the door at her impatient query.

He looked at her so searchingly that she felt a guilty flush mount in her face. "What are you looking at?" she cried, covering her hot cheeks with her palms.

Carter stepped back out of sight. "I beg pardon. I am distressed for your health," he said stiffly from the other side of the door. "Lena told me that she thought you had fever, that you were that nervous and wouldn't eat."

"Come in, Carter. I'm sorry." Her voice was quieter, but she watched him with dilated eyes as he appeared,

moving hesitatingly into her presence. "I just don't want any food . . . But I'm all right."

"I feel my responsibility," Carter explained. He was eyeing the Allasch bottle. "Mr. Karanoff would not forgive me if I neglected my duty at such a time. I came up to see if it wouldn't be best to call Dr. Bennig. They say measles is going around."

Measles! A child's disease for her who had grown old in experience . . .

Her tense attitude relaxed. "You are very careful, very thoughtful, but don't call Dr. Bennig, not ever again. We are not having him. Dr. Field is my doctor now. But I am all right, and I'm sure it isn't measles."

After further parley Carter went, but Terry was certain he would return. She could see the conviction of measles in his eye.

Whether it was Carter's anxious concern for her that sent the telepathic signal of distress to Dr. Field or not, only the fates themselves could tell, but as Carter closed the door of his young mistress' room, Dr. Field, who was pacing his office, thinking intently of his new patient, reached impulsively for the telephone, called The Towers and heard Carter's voice in immediate response.

"I am inquiring for Mrs. Karanoff," Field said. "Was she all right when she reached home? No need for me to speak to her directly if she is engaged . . ."

Carter poured his worry into the ear that, clearly, was made to hear worry. He begged to suggest that the doctor would come in and see for himself. He, Carter, hated to close the house for the night while Mrs. Karanoff was so feverish-like. She had refused dinner.

Dr. Field said, briefly, that he would call on Mrs. Karanoff at once. He would shut up his office and come right over.

XI

LIKE the sound of weeping the rain beat on the windows and dripped to the sills of the quiet room. A withered leaf driven by the wind from its parent tree whirled through the open casement and lay wet and alien on the soft gray carpet.

It was morning, but the light was so dim that the silent figure on the bed was indistinct in the gloom and the woman who tiptoed noiselessly to peer into the sleeping face had to bend over the bed to see. The door that stood open into the hall moved on its hinges as if to close, but was caught by the draft and swung back again. There was a creak, a stir of garments, and a voice from the pillow said, "Lena?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Why are you here?"

"Dr. Field's on the 'phone asking for you. It's nine o'clock." The girl had moved to the telephone table. She held the instrument toward her mistress, but for a long moment there was no response. Terry lay with closed eyes, her face turned away.

"He's holding the line," Lena reminded her in a hushed voice—the room was so still, the only sound was the wet whisper of the rain.

"Tell . . . him . . ." Terry began, but paused. "Ask him if you can take the message?"

"I did," Lena whispered. "Down stairs."

Terry sat up and held out her hand for the telephone. In the stillness she noticed the unaccustomed huskiness of her voice, "I will see you if you wish to come. I will be ready any time."

She gave the instrument into the maid's hands and looked up into her face with eyes so unhappy that the girl bent above her with a murmured caress. Terry pressed her hands against her forehead.

"It must be something awful to have insumnya," Lena said, watching her. "It don't seem to me you've slept since you come home from Chicago, and Dr. Field don't cure you. Did that hot chocolate help any last night?"

"It made all the difference. I went to sleep soon after you left me. How did you know I was awake?"

"I heard sounds, so as I said to myself, 'My land, that can't be crying. Mrs. Karanoff has nothing to cry about,' and I decided it was the wind and rain blowing, but I got up, and then I saw your light and heard you close a door or something."

"It was thoughtful of you to bring me chocolate. You went down into the dark kitchen alone? It must have been cold. And the wind blew so . . . all night. It made all the difference, your caring that much . . . Knowing somebody cared . . ." The voice, almost monotone in its dim minor, seemed an echo of things thought and said long time ago; like the still face, it dreamed its part in the scene.

"Shall I bring Dr. Field up when he comes?"

"No . . ." And with an effort, "I'll see him in the study."

"Your bath now?"

"Yes . . ."

"And breakfast in bed?"

"No breakfast."

The girl closed windows and turned on lights; brought the claret velvet robe of that night two weeks ago and held it open.

Roused to the present and its needs Terry slipped out of bed and into the waiting garment. "Don't stay . . . I don't need you now . . ." and she went into the dressing room and closed the door.

She sat, still wrapped, on her dressing bench, her hands lying inert in her lap. All about her from every angle reflections of herself looked out at her from the mirrored doors of her wardrobes. Seven times herself she saw,

seven pallid faces, seven quivering mouths, seven pairs of wincing eyes.

Bowing her head she closed her eyes and leaned on the dressing table unable to begin her toilet.

Still the silence of the great house hung heavy as doom, waiting, listening with an inexhaustible patience for some sign from her. It crowded closer upon her, shutting her into that room of vanities, pressing heavier until, gasping for breath, she rose and flung open a casement window. Leaning upon the sill she looked through the silver mist that hung over the lake, saw the dark slate gray of the sullen water and the dim white of the *Russia's* swaying bulk.

For almost two weeks, beginning that afternoon in Dr. Field's office, there had been rain that dripped, that brooded, that roused with wind only to storm again and rain. Color and light, joy and life were drowned in gray floods, shrouded in gray mist, buried in gray hopelessness.

Summer and the mellow warmth of early autumn were gone, the Eden of the year was past and the Eden of her heart. For her the gates were barred and her song of songs was echoed only in the drip of rain and the wind's soft weeping.

She stood listening and when a sudden rushing breeze brought a sprinkling of moisture against her face, she threw back her head to receive it thirstily and looked up through the branches of a slender tree, to the sky.

After a time as she breathed more deeply, sighing, courage came to her and the memory of that evening long ago when she had gazed at Nicolai's portrait and reasoned with brave logic toward a plan and a resolution.

That resolution . . . She buckled it about her every morning upon rising and went through her days with quiet order; tested the buckles afresh at evening, but somewhere in the dark tunnels of the night lost it again and was a soul adrift.

Soul adrift was in her face when she went softly down

the long staircase to Dr. Field who waited in the study, but resolution was strong in her thought.

With resolution she entered the room and stood a moment before she closed the door. Field had not moved when she entered, but at the sharp click of the latch he turned from the window where he was standing, as she had stood upstairs, and met her eyes.

She was looking at him with that same steady bravery, her face still and white save for the warm line of her lips and the living eyes. As was her way when they met, she forced a little smile that lifted the corners of her mouth with sweet determination, and held a moment until he should have caught it.

It seemed to him as he faced her that her radiance had been muted to a somberness that was nun-like in its effect. The dull jersey of her dress, that sheathed her from the very lobes of her ears, was severely plain and her dark hair was drawn down smoothly over her ears with the utmost simplicity.

In the dull light of the fall morning the room was hushed and drab. Only the gold braidings of the Napoleonic designs on cover and chair drew lines of brightness on the soft velvet of the furnishings. As if he too felt the hush of the house, Dr. Field spoke in a voice that was husky with restraint.

"Nicolai comes home tonight?"

"Yes. But I don't know the train. Perhaps he'll come in from the north, from Quebec . . ."

She talked of trains! In that same muted music of tone she talked of *trains* as if between them there crouched no memory, no palpitating present.

"You are going to explain to him . . ." he began when she had done with talk of trains.

"Exactly what you told me to say. He may send for you this evening. He always goes to the source for his facts."

She could talk of Nicolai that way! With that same

tender tone of amusement for his eccentricities; she could consider his home-coming with serene control.

"I have brought this envelope back to you . . ."

"An envelope?"

"The envelope you brought to me. I cannot keep this money . . ."

"Why can't you keep it?" Now her voice was sharp with antagonism.

"You know why."

"I know nothing of the sort. What is this you are saying to me?"

"I can't do it. I can't keep it . . ."

"You mean . . ."

If she had seemed white before, she was ghastly now. Even her vivid mouth was paling and her eyes darkened, grew black and sick with anger.

"You mean to say that you go back on our bargain? We pledged each other mutual help. That was the understanding, and now you would count me out? You would refuse to let me do my part?"

"I don't know what you mean, but I made no bargain. I can't bear to hear you use that word."

She moved a step nearer the massive table that lay between them and peered down at the heavy envelope, tape bound, that he was crushing in his tense fingers; looked up again at him while a shiver as of indignation ran over her. A moment more and she broke out, "Why can't you bear the word bargain? Why do you have these attacks of . . . I can't name them. There is nothing wrong about our bargain or our having a bargain except failure to live up to it. To help you and to make a beginning of the new hospital are my return for your help. So long as you live up to those terms you play fair, and if you go back on them, if you count me out, you do not play fair. You have difficulty getting my point of view because you lack courage. If you would remember what I have said, you would not make these difficulties. The

money is yours . . . It became yours days and days ago. If you can't keep it you can give it away wherever you please. It ceased to be mine before I ever gave it to you. Don't you see that? Don't you understand? It has become a matter of honor . . . now."

"Honor! I've sunk low enough. It's you who don't understand. That's what I can't bear—your business-like tone when you talk to me of a bargain. As if this . . . ," he shook the envelope, "ever entered my mind at the beginning."

He tossed the envelope to a pile of magazines and walked around the end of the table to her. "You are stubbornly holding to this idea of yours because you won't admit that you love me. I've told you . . . I've told you that I love you, and you love me or you couldn't . . . you wouldn't . . . you *couldn't* have done this thing, and yet you go on pretending to yourself and me!"

She had not moved, not even swayed, though he had come so close that his breath was in her hair, so close that he could see the pulsing of alarm in her dilated eyes.

They looked hard at each other, locked in silent struggle, he to make her see, she refusing the very suggestion, with every tightened nerve and muscle.

"Terry . . ." Quickly he put his arms about her and drew her nearer; held her close and kissed her with furious ardor, as he might have shaken her, might have struck her. And with even more terrible fury she did strike him, twice with all her might, struggled, pushed until she was free from him and backing away. He followed still holding her with his hot eyes.

For a while they could neither of them speak. Until they could breathe they stood, eyes fixed, shaken by the turmoil of their anger. Slowly then Terry lifted her hands to her breast and pressed them flat one over the other. That gesture of hers! As if she held a crucifix. In these days he had seen it again and again and never did she seem to know that she did it.

"I could . . . kill you," she was panting through the broken words, "for touching me." Her head was trembling, her lips trembled. The white, white hands against the black of her dress rose and fell with her labored breathing. "That . . . sort of thing . . . is over . . . between us. I told you. Forever." With the last words her anger seemed to die. Her hands dropped to her sides, her body sank from its passionate tension.

Field again moved nearer her and she looked up through tears.

"I've tried to make you understand and you won't believe me. You think that only love could account for me. And that . . . is true. But don't make any mistake. It is my love for Nicolai . . . That night when you knocked . . . that first night . . . and I thought it was Carter and said 'come in' and you walked in . . . that night I was mad. I know it. And everything that happened was madness. There was the doppel-kümmel and my terrible unhappiness over Nicolai. But I wasn't sorry. I felt that it was my one chance for success, and your only chance too. I wouldn't allow myself to regret, I don't regret now. I am glad and relieved because I know it is for everybody's good—yours and mine and Nicolai's and all those who belong to us and who look to us for success. Can't you see that? Isn't it as simple as A B C?"

"No, it isn't simple. It's anything but simple. Because I love you."

"Don't say that to me again! Don't look at me that way! Think of Nicolai and you won't dare to say it."

He was gnawing his lip, one clenched hand pressed on the table while his unhappy eyes still searched her vivid face.

She meant these things she said. She was passionately sincere in this logic of hers. From the first he had felt her sincerity and respected it, yet he couldn't believe she understood her own heart. She must love him; she did

love him. She herself didn't know it yet, but knowledge would come to her. He felt torn into a million pieces by her sweetness and her terrible stubbornness. He closed his eyes to shut out the sight of her pleading beauty. All the nun-like restraint was gone from her. Color had flamed up into her face and the black frock that had imposed its severity upon her pallor was now a foil for her radiant youth.

When he opened his eyes he saw that she was waiting impatiently for his attention. She began impressively. "Dr. Field, truly I am frightened by this silly attitude of yours. The sort of thing you talk is terribly dangerous and all, all wrong. From this minute on we have both got to forget—I mean that—*forget* these things. Never, *even when we are alone,* are you to use my first name or to speak of our secret. This child is my own, and I give him with all my love to Nicolai. You are my doctor whom I admire and trust, and nothing more. You are to come here exactly as you came that night when you had dessert with me, and the next night when Carter called you. There has been no other sort of meeting. If you behave that way, I can love having you for my doctor, and I can do everything for you. I want to do for you, but if you let your eyes or your manner say anything of this that we are to forget, you will lose my faith and put your own life in terrible danger. Now give me your hand and promise to play your part like the man I think you are."

She put out her hand and kept her straight, blue look on his, but he gave her no response. He stood there, shoulders bent, his haggard eyes heavy with the sickness in his heart as he looked at her. What sort of things had this girl seen in her young life that she could live this doctrine of expediency? What had she been taught, or not taught, of sin? She was a clear-eyed goddess, as starry in her love for Nicolai as she had been that night a year ago when as Pharaoh's daughter, she had walked into his heart and life. She had explained carefully her

doctrine of failure, the only sin, the cardinal sin, and she had said that Nicolai and all successful people lived by that regardless of their talk. Was he a fatuous fool while she, little product of the practical, knew the truth of things? She was right in her mandate to him. His life would be terribly in danger if he so much as by the flicker of an eyelash betrayed the memory of their intimacy. Patience was his lot. He must wait—bide his time and wait for that moment when she would know the truth that now her heart denied. This he admitted, yet a last flare of bitter jealousy flashed into his eyes. "So I am nothing to you, nor ever have been, but a . . . tool that you have used for Nicolai's dear sake, and flung aside?" His tone was an edged sneer, but it did not disconcert her.

"A tool . . ." she repeated with sweet inflection. "If you wish to see it that way. I'm sorry you do, though. To me you are a very . . . charming, and . . . brilliant physician. You are Dr. Field, and I like you, and trust you with my honor and my life and my happiness. Surely that is hardly the description of a tool."

There was no use resisting her. She was right. He extended his hand and she gave him hers. They stood, smiling faintly, tears close behind the pledges in their eyes. "I will try to be worthy of your faith. . . . Your honor and happiness are safe with me. Do you believe that?"

"I do. . . ."

"Then . . . God bless you. Goodbye. . . ." He lifted her hand and kissed it gravely, released it after a long firm pressure and turned blindly toward his coat.

With one clenched fist pressed hard on her lips she went slowly to the study door and opened it, and when he passed her, it was she who was blind with tears.

She heard Carter's even voice in the front hall, a murmured conversation and the closing of the door before she succeeded in forcing back the tears. Then blinking resolutely, smiling to prove her satisfaction with her suc-

cess so far, she walked slowly toward a bowl of chrysanthemums that she had not noticed before.

The clouds were lifting and the first brighter rays of light sought and kissed the shaggy yellow flowers so that they shone like pale sunlight in the gloom of the room.

She stood there clear-eyed again, firm lipped, touching them with cold fingers, neither thinking nor feeling, only waiting with suspended emotion as between acts of a drama in the theater, but suddenly she started forward remembering the tape-bound envelope that Dr. Field had flung onto the pile of magazines. She looked for it, swiftly, on the table, on the floor, in the seat of Nicolai's writing chair, but it was gone.

Dr. Field had taken it. His scorn, his tear-blind eyes, his God-bless-you still breathing like a prayer in the quiet room, had not been enough to make him forget to take it with him.

BOOK THREE

ROSALIND

God has such a splendid way
Of tempting beauty out of clay . . .
—Louise Ayers Garnett.

I

"I THINK I'll have to order some dogs." Nicolai stood before the fire in the hall, his feet apart, his back to the mantel looking down at his young wife. They had just come in from a drive around the lake and through the park. Nicolai's fur-lined coat lay over a chair, his driving gloves and hat occupied another chair, and Terry, still in sable coat and hat, was blowing on her cold fingers.

"If the furniture weren't so full of your things, I'd sit down and put my feet on the fender. I feel as if I had had them in ice water."

"You've had them in something just as cold—Wisconsin air. They used to say up here that going to bed in this climate, in winter, was a feat of physical endurance . . . when we had stoves." He shivered. "Terrific. Russia isn't worse. Here, sit on this." He moved a chair forward for Terry.

"Yes, and when it's hot the tropics aren't worse. The dampness, I suppose. Is that why?"

"That and the American temperament. I wish Carter would hurry with the tea. I'm cold inside as well as out. And thirsty. Peculiar thing. Cold makes you thirsty."

Terry unfastened her coat and threw it back. She held her hands to the fire watching the sparks that snapped and quivered above the flames.

Nicolai returned to the subject he had introduced when they first came in. "Every child should have a few dogs around. We want them on the lawns. I have meant to order a puppy ever since old Smoke died. I miss old Smoke—old fellow."

"I want a collie," Terry said looking up. "I love a Scotch collie. They are such adorable puppies."

"Not in this house." Nicolai scowled at her. "Why should we have anything Scotch? I want a Russian wolf-hound."

Terry moaned and threw out her hands. "I might have known! Of course a Russian wolf-hound for you, but a collie for me. Or, since way back in the beginning of time, I was Irish, get me an Irish terrier. I could name him Dennis Parnell. And your dog can be Boris Ivanovitch. I love the name Boris."

"Who is Boris Ivanovitch?"

"I'm sure I don't know. That doesn't matter. It's Russian."

"Let's name him for the Grand Duke Alexis."

"Boris is shorter and more Russian."

"Is anything more Russian than the Russian Prince?" Nicolai asked smiling.

"The royal family are no more Russian than English and German. You are more Russian than they."

Nicolai threw up his hands. "Right," he said. His eyes flashed her the compliment of his admiration. "You know, that's true. Then his name is Boris. That is settled. Boris is my dog. Dennis is yours, but we were going to get a dog for Toni."

Terry looked intently at the fire. "Toni is to be an American," she said steadily above the agitated thumping of her heart. "Neither Russian nor Irish. There is no use of clinging to our European ancestry when we are in this country."

"It's not easy to get away from your ancestry. Whether you like it or not I think you'll find your son is quite Russian." Nicolai's tone told her that the matter of Toni's nationality was settled. He would be the child of an American mother on American soil, but he would be taught the affectations of another country.

"If he is Russian in type it will be because you work

hard to make him so," she said with spirit. "I think it will be very difficult to teach a boy brought up in this country to feel the least Russian. I hope he will resent it himself. I shall expect him to resent it." She raised snapping eyes to his face, but Nicolai was much too comfortable to take umbrage from her challenge. "Three cheers for the red, white and blue," he mocked, waving an arm with an imaginary flag. "Here's the tea. I suppose you expect the young person to look like me and be American at the same time."

"Look like you?" Terry's tone held the question suspended while she turned her chair toward the tea tray Carter placed on the table at her side, and made an exacting business of filling the glasses. Carter took Nicolai his tea, passed the muffin stand and returned it to Terry's side, yet when she nodded to him to go he still delayed to gather up their wraps. "You know. . . ." The door closed softly behind him. "It would be nice if he had brown hair and blue eyes like your father's. I love your looks, Niki. You are my dream of a man, but the blue-eyed people are the executives usually. They are the ruling class in any country."

Nicolai made no reply. He was looking at her. She gave her attention to the flame beneath the samovar and its blue warmth called the blood into her cheeks. "Do you think this thing is making a funny noise?" she asked, and heard Nicolai say, "No. It isn't making any noise. Go on."

"Oh." She looked as if she had forgotten what they were talking about, put her finger tips against her vivid cheeks and said sweetly, lifting her eyes in a flashing smile, "The cold air and the tea and everything make my cheeks burn dreadfully. I was going to say that Toni could have any possible combination of coloring. There's my mother's light brown hair and blue eyes, my father's Spanish olive coloring, Aunt Mabel's golden lights, my blond brunette mixture. . . ." She paused with an inflec-

tion that threw the conversational ball to Nicolai. He caught it and continued for her, "All the Slavic fairness of the Karanoffs, and the black and white of my mother's race."

Terry looked at him quickly. It was so seldom that he spoke of his maternal inheritance that she waited expectantly, wishing he would continue, but he evidently had no intention of expressing his thoughts, for he was not looking at her but into the fire, his elbow on the mantle where he had set his plate. For another minute he stood there, his face a mask save that it seemed to Terry who watched him as she drank her tea, that the usual twist of bitterness had gone from his lips. He was happier these days, had been happier since the promise of Toni than at any time since she had known him, and so generously disposed toward her that his past tempers and ugliness seemed a wretched unreality. Again she was his idol, the object of his special care. . . . She caught herself up, remembering his displeasure when Dr. Field had decided she ought not to ride Melody for another year. She was well enough to ride and disappointed herself when she saw Nicolai and Storm disappearing in the woods without her, but Nicolai's annoyance at being denied this small pleasure had surprised her.

She looked at him now, however, with quiet understanding. He loved her enough to adore her when she did as he wished in all things, but even the longed-for, the princeling son's safety was not always first with him, it seemed.

He turned toward her with a movement of his head and shoulders as if he were brushing aside an unpleasant thought. "About the dogs," he said. "Then we'll have a pair of wolf-hounds and an Irish terrier." He stepped to Terry's side to have his glass refilled with tea, but Terry held it between her circling hands while she said, disappointed, "Must we have a pair of wolf-hounds? Three dogs is enough and I do want a collie . . . and a Boston

terrier. The Boston terrier is pure American. I'll give up Dennis."

"You stubborn little spoiled child. Because I want wolf-hounds you insist on an American breed!" His eyes smiled at her, but his tone was incredulous of her selfishness. "There is no animal extant that is so exceedingly picturesque, so completely the aristocrat, as the Russian wolf-hound."

"I know. . . ." She filled his glass and he emptied it quickly then bent above her, looked at her lowered face with amused tenderness and touched her chin with his finger tip. She waited, listening for the decision she knew he had reached.

"Very well," he said at last. "A wolf-hound, a Boston terrier, and a collie. But that's the wrong idea, indiscriminate hodge-podge of dogs."

"When we see which breed Toni likes best we can order more of that kind."

"He'll like Boris best. I know that. What will you name your collie and your Boston pup?"

Terry considered. "I think MacRae would be fine for the collie, for Clara. That would please her. And Dr. Field is so very American we could name the Boston terrier for him."

"Call him Dr. Field, for instance?" he mocked.

"No . . . We could name him Yankee Doodle and call him Doodle in honor of Dr. Field."

Nicolai straightened and threw out his hands expressively. "Right." His mood was exceedingly amiable. "I'll order them from Durban. . . ."

He ordered them from Durban and two of the lot, the collie and the Boston terrier, arrived several days before the big New Year open house Nicolai had insisted should be the first hospitality in celebration of the prospective heir.

"We must have a general sort of affair and invite the

people whose children and whose children's children will have reason to respect the power of the young person," he said with severe dignity, and Terry knew that he was feeling himself Napoleon. "We will receive from three until nine with continuous buffet service, music for dancing and winter sports in the park."

Terry understood that he would have liked on that day to announce the coming of his heir with trumpet blast, and though she kept a steady pressure for secrecy, she knew he told some of the men who accompanied him to the stables to see the dogs. Whether Nicolai told or not was a matter of indifference to her. It was all for him anyway, and she wanted him to enjoy it in his own way, but she stood for the conventionality of the thing. He must not walk around among his guests making occasion to mention Nicolai junior as she knew he would if he were not restrained.

He felt already the strength of the House of Karanoff; he saw not only his son, but his son's sons, himself the patriarchal monarch among them, and it gratified the Oriental in him to foresee The Towers an old palace of feudal Russian elegance continuing unchanged on one of America's frontiers. Terry knew that when he thought of Toni it was not as an infant, but as a youth molded by his European tutors, broken to the business harness by Nicolai himself—an eager, balanced, astute young linguist who would play a world game with daring and brilliance.

"If Toni is a little girl . . ." she suggested once, but never again.

"She would have exactly the same tutors, the same training. Her husband would take her name, not she his," he told her and added with his characteristic light shrug, "unless of course, she had a brother, as she probably would."

No, Terry had never suggested the possibility of a daughter again, nor did she dare to resist the idea of a little girl in the hands of tutors under orders to sharpen her

for business. She made thought of that, like everything else in her days, a matter either for indifference or postponement.

She wanted to be alone and to be still. She had closed all but a few of her mental doors. As in Bluebeard's house, so in her mind, there was a forbidden room, for since she could not have solitude she made a solitude of her own that was like the consciousness of a half waking dream wherein people, events, emotions hardly touched her. She sealed herself in a vacuum of pre-determined opinion, and fought no wars within her own conscience.

During the New Year festivities she was little more than the silent spirit of hospitality, smiling, acquiescent, too sensitive to the shyness of some of her guests to behave with the graciousness of manner Nicolai would have liked. She had begun to feel recently that it was not for her to cultivate graciousness but to be simple. She needed the love of these people, needed their understanding, and she made her silent appeal as she moved quietly among them.

Of Carter she inquired frequently, with a vague anxiety, "Are they all being served? Do you surely give them plenty?" and of Clara, "You think they are doing exactly as they please? We want them to feel at home."

She watched Nicolai and Harry Field when they happened to be in the same scene, while the conversation with Nicolai as to Toni's probable coloring ran through her mind again and again. She had planned for that very moment so carefully that when it had come she had gone through it as she would have gone through a well rehearsed part in a play. Her observation about the blue-eyed ruling classes had come to her from her memory of a time, far back in her girlhood, when she had heard two actors, a German and a Spaniard arguing on race. The German had declaimed vehemently upon the theme. The Castilians, the Bourbons, the Venetians—as witness Portia—had been blue-eyed people, he said, and Terry had

remembered. Nicolai too had been impressed by the argument. He had returned to discussion of it and she noticed that since then he had put less insistence upon resemblance to himself. His father's caste was a matter of pride in him; it was a deeper vanity that his father's type, rather than his own, should persist.

She sat in a high-backed chair late that afternoon thinking her own thoughts—the thoughts she had prescribed for herself as true to her peculiar philosophy, true to her purpose, while she smiled at her guests as they came and went about her, and listened dreamily to Clara who talked happily in low tones of Dr. Field's dawning success with pride for her own part in it. "They struck bottom that day I came here to lunch and asked you to help them," she said, "Harry told me that was the turning point. Things are quite different with them now; he is making good at the mills too, and he told me today he expects to get a runabout. An automobile, I mean."

Terry nodded, smiling her pleasure in the news. That was right; he needed a runabout.

She was remembering how easily she had managed that matter of the medical department at the mills. Nicolai did not expect her to be clever. He had no idea she ever played a subtle game to have her way with him, for in the beginning she had been so guileless, so frankly young in her relationship to him that he still believed her quite artless. He must never know, of course, that she had changed; he would not like to think himself adroitly managed as she had managed for the hospital department. She had waited for that till Nicolai had surrendered to Dr. Field as a medical authority, then in a moment after dinner one evening she had insinuated herself into his chair beside him with the childish announcement that they were to have a lovely talk. That lovely talk soon touched on the subject of her old dream—a children's hospital for White Falls—and when she arrived roundabout at Dr. Field's plan for the mills she forestalled Nicolai's

suspicion by saying, "I can't imagine what good it could be to him. He wouldn't have a salary; he'd be managing the thing for you and only getting his regular fees."

Nicolai had replied that that would be his look-out, whereupon she had talked of the valuable time lost in trivial accidents, while Nicolai listened in receptive silence. The next day he sent for Field and the thing had been agreed upon. Darling Nicolai. So funny, so full of mysteries and contradictions, yet at times so simple.

Clara was still talking to her about the Fields, but she didn't listen. It wasn't necessary. This was one of the high moments when her love for Nicolai was like prayer, and her heart an altar whereon she rededicated to him wholly and with all her soul's generosity, the child he wanted.

While she was loving him so, steeping her consciousness in an incense of her own making, he came into the room carrying the puppies which he deposited in her velvet lap. At once her chair was surrounded, and she held them against her breast so that they looked out over her protecting arms at the smiling faces about her.

"This," she said rousing, and indicating the puppy on the right, "is Yankee Doodle from Boston, and this,"—to the puppy on the left, "is Mr. Clara MacRae of Edinburgh."

Nicolai, seeing the interest they excited, took them from her and interrupted the admiring chorus with a recital of their pedigrees, and offered a fabulous prize to anyone who could discover a flaw in Doodle's marking.

"This little pup was sent on by Durban of the Lakewood Kennels and the check that paid for him had three ciphers after a five. The Scotch fellow has a fine pedigree, but he comes cheaper than the American product," and Nicolai was off on the egotism of the American producer.

Terry had never known Nicolai to be so talkative. He liked to display his possessions, but he did so,

usually, with an air of casual contemptuousness that seemed to imply that while this stuff was good in its way there were treasures he could show, if he wished, that were really well worth seeing. Today, however, he enjoyed his own jokes about the puppies and she listened while she sat motionless in her Italian chair looking up at Doodle's brown face where Nicolai held him against his shoulder. The puppy's soft little wrinkled nose and gentle brown eyes were so infantile and sensitive they brought a smile of tenderness to her lips, but her eyes moved to Mac's alert quivering head and as they did so she saw that Dr. Field was looking at her.

The people gathered around Nicolai were most of them intent on his words or the dogs, but Harry Field, fathoms deep in his own thoughts, oblivious of the room and the faces about him, was gazing at her with fascinated unselfconsciousness. She was shocked and alarmed. She frowned at him and glanced about quickly to see if his look had been observed.

As far as she could see they were not being watched, yet her agitated expression had failed to carry her alarm to him. She spoke, saying the first thought that suggested itself to turn his attention away from herself. "Which do you like best, Dr. Field?" she asked, and he sighed, blinking, as if he had been recalled from another world.

Nicolai heard her question, and before Dr. Field collected himself sufficiently to answer he turned to him. "Of course you know what you're to say. This little Boston highbrow was ordered in your honor." The two men looked levelly into each other's eyes, and Terry noticed that they were the same height.

"No, I didn't know it," Field returned. "How is that?" A slow flush spread over his face.

"Haven't you told the doctor, Terry?" Nicolai asked, looking down at her. "Why, man, this dog was ordered to represent you in the household. My wife would have it,

and Clara here is the godmother of the collie. I intend to call them Mac and Doc."

Terry felt that she must have gone as white as paper, but she managed to smile as Clara, responding with laughing excitement to Nicolai's announcement, turned to her crying, "That's too lovely! And since he is an all white collie he really is a Scotch-American product, right out of the melting pot like me, because only America can breed the white ones. They can't do it in Scotland, you know." Under cover of the general talk she leaned to Terry and whispered, "You're an angel. This is the kind of advertising that makes talk! It's exactly what Harry Field needs."

II

NOT since their talk in the study that morning in October when Nicolai was on his way home from Quebec, had Terry and Field touched the subject that lay sleeping between them. He had understood that it was a closed book, that on his acceptance of her terms hung his own success, and safety from a terrible peril for them both. Now she must open that subject with a warning to him. The terror that had leaped into her throat when she had seen his look told her how close beneath the surface of her indifference was that old fear of the Nicolai she might rouse to vengeance.

How to have a moment alone with Dr. Field she did not know. He kept a discreet distance; he called on her professionally usually in the evening when Nicolai was at home and his attention, always flattering in its deferential grace, was given to Nicolai now rather than to her. She had begun to rest secure in his competence to manage a difficult relationship without realizing that he must guard not only his manner but his very thought, waking and sleeping. Evidently he supposed he could think as he

pleased if his behavior was true to form, but he couldn't. She knew that now with icy fingers at her heart. He must close a certain door in his mind, until he, too, dwelt in a Bluebeard house. She wished she could tell him frankly how utterly she felt Toni to be Nicolai's. Nicolai had desired him, had demanded him, had achieved him. She belonged to Nicolai and what was hers was his. It was like that slant on an adopted child. The adopted child could be proud because his parents had chosen him, had said, "From among all these children I choose this child to love," whereas natural children were sent without any opportunity for selection or exchange. Toni was in that sense very peculiarly Nicolai's, and she wanted Dr. Field to understand it so.

Oh, how she wished the people would all go so that she could close her eyes and be still! She was like a sick man struggling to effect a cure through thought and prayer; she needed to attend to that thought and that prayer without the distracting, the tiring presence of people—people who called themselves friends, but were strangers behind the masks of their faces.

About her now was a group of her younger friends. Sam Caulkins, the center of interest, was showing some squealing girls how bravely he could hold a lighted match in his mouth, teeth shut on the cold end, the flame making him grotesquely illumined from within. For a moment she was amused by Sam and she did not see Dr. Field when he approached the group until he pushed Sam's head affectionately from the rear, and reaching across to her, offered his hand.

"Can't I take you away from this jackanapes, Mrs. Karanoff?"

Terry put her hand in Field's and rose at once, laughing back at Sam as she left him, relieved because Dr. Field had come in that direct disarming way. He was saying, "Carter has been airing the drawing room. He had the windows open and now it is cool and deserted. . . ."

They talked, smiling, as they walked the width of the great hall and half the length of the drawing room to the fireplace where fresh logs snapped behind their screen, and a pair of tall silver andirons with cupids wreathed in flowers reflected the color of the flames.

"This is refreshing," Terry cried, glancing about the deserted room. "How did you know Carter had been airing?"

"I was hunting for a quiet place for a talk with you. You were very white when we were looking at the dogs. I wondered why."

How easy he made it for her to tell him the thing that was keeping her heart at a quickened beat, yet she could not begin. Quite successfully, she found, she had been building a wall between them that was now a barrier of formality. She talked of winter sports instead, of skiing and coasting and skating, especially of the skiing of which she had never heard till Nicolai had told her about it and ordered her skis.

"And you can do it! Didn't you fall?"

"Nooo. . . . I tried a little hill first and wobbled dreadfully, then I caught my balance and got that trick of using my arms for guidance, and my knees. Your knees have to be like springs. It isn't as hard as dancing, my kind of dancing, not nearly. I really love it, but not the climb back up. Come over and try it some time. We have a horse draw us uphill now. That was Nicolai's bright idea."

"Is he willing you should go in for sports at that rate? It sounds dangerous to me."

She lifted doubtful eyebrows. "If I did fall the snow is soft. He doesn't seem to care."

"I care."

She pretended not to hear and went on talking again with forced animation about Lyda and Clara on skis while she turned to the chair he had drawn forward and sank down sideways, leaning on the cushioned arm, and he

moved nearer her to stand against the high mantel, his arms folded, his head bent as he listened.

All afternoon he had watched her furtively and he had seen no least sign of animation such as now pervaded her like a fever. She had moved, a little shadow of her old dancing self, with that same stillness that had laid its weight upon her long ago, an eternity ago, in October. Save for the moment of her terrible anger with him and now, she had been held by that strange tranquillity when she was in his presence. It was probable that she did not want to be alone with him and had roused herself to talk against the pauses that might give him opportunity to sound the personal note which she dreaded. Why, he wondered, did she continue with him as her physician? She need give Nicolai no reason for wanting a change save her whim; she would know how to get her way in such a matter. Instead she was playing straight to her promise. She was pulling for him in her quiet way; she had urged Clara to accept the post as his assistant at the mills, because she believed it was the beginning of a new hospital in which he should be chief of medical staff and she superintendent of nurses. Could it be—he felt pale with the thought of it—that she feared his ill will? Did she think she had to keep in his graces? There was no knowing what she thought. She had a genius for seeing things at an oblique angle so different from the usual as to be unique. That she should be living in fear of him was unthinkable. He must reassure her; he must search into her peculiar mental processes and find what was wrong with her. How little she knew her own compelling charm, her dearness. . . . He felt tears in his throat when he imagined himself as behaving with anything less than his most chivalrous toward her.

He paid no attention to the things she was talking about. He hardly knew that she was talking at all till suddenly she stopped short, her eyes on his in trouble and alarm and drawing a deep breath said, "Dr. Field.

Please . . . what are you thinking when you look that way?"

"What way?"

She had pressed her hands flat against the black velvet of her bodice—that gesture as if she held a crucifix—and again the color faded from her face.

"A while ago," she began, "when Nicolai had the puppies. You were looking at me. . . ."

"Yes?"

"You had forgotten yourself; where you were; everything. That is the reason I was pale. You see, you noticed that! You must watch yourself. Whatever it is you think when you look that way you must . . . kill; forget; put out of your mind as you would put out a fire in your house."

"You mean . . . Tell me how I looked; how can I know?"

"Can you remember what you were thinking just now?"

"Yes."

"Then . . . it is that."

"That I . . . love you."

"Oh . . . No." She put her hands over her face in a movement of passionate denial, but immediately looked toward the door and straightened her shoulders.

"Isn't it possible for you to understand the danger? You must close your thought. Lie to yourself. Deny that thing you said or it will . . . defeat you." She was biting her lip, struggling both to talk and not to talk, to say the least possible and yet to convince him.

"I cannot bear," he began, but hesitated for words as if they spoke in different tongues and had need of careful choosing in their speech, "that you should fear anything from me. Do you? Have you?"

"Yes . . ."

"You mustn't. . . . If you would believe how much I care . . . If I were certain you understood. . . ."

"I understand the danger. So far our success is com-

plete. Both of us. Your success makes me very happy. I almost promised it, you know, and it has come."

"Why do you care? Why do you help me?" If she answered this question honestly she would know that she loved him. He couldn't believe she did not.

"I owe that to you. You are my friend. I want you to succeed just as I did from the first. You remember?"

"Only that?"

"Only that. It is enough. It was right in the beginning and is right now. Aren't you glad of your success? Aren't you happy in it?"

"Are you? Are you happy in your success?"

"Of course I am! Why shouldn't I be?"

"I have reason to remember these days that Victor Hugo said, 'Success is hideous.' What of that?"

Her face was lifted and she rose as if the words had drawn her to her feet. She looked steadily into his eyes while her own widened, "Did Victor Hugo say that . . . of success?"

"Yes. And others have felt it."

Her attitude relaxed; her head drooped and he watched her as she touched the corsage at her waist, lifting a wilted violet with absent fingers. When she looked up, her mouth was firm, her eyes cool and half covered by her lids. "Well . . . I don't feel it. Success is everything to me and worth its price!" Her voice was as steady as her eyes and clear as the ring of metal, and after she had said the words she continued to meet his doubtful gaze with unwavering courage.

He made no answer. He did not believe her, and he meant that she should know it if by looking his doubt he could tell her so. She must not think that she need play a part to the one man who loved her and understood her.

With a stirring movement as of trembling confusion that came upon her suddenly, she looked about in panic and began to talk, almost stammering while her lip quiv-

ered pathetically. "Sometimes . . . not often, but there are times when I . . . I wonder why I cared so much."

III

IMMEDIATELY after New Year's Day the cold that had been playing fitfully at the business of winter settled into a steady deepening frigidity that defied storm windows and the terrific resistance of the furnace. The Towers was a house well built to withstand the rigors of winter, but the icy fingers worked their way through the very glass and laid caps of frost on the window latchings. There were long days for Terry when the great drifts piled above the first floor sills and blew in clouds of frosty white across the open spaces of the park.

She tried to lose herself in books; tried sewing, a new occupation but one she found interesting. It held her attention and challenged the creative in her. She sat by her fire, making tiny tucks, struggling with the intricacies of rolled edges and French seams, and though the inaccurate needlework made the little garments pathetically funny, to Terry and Nicolai they were tiny and beautiful. When the layette, ordered from a French convent, arrived and Terry unpacked layer after layer of fine nainsook and flannel she found courage to smile at her own clumsy efforts. There was mist on her lashes when she laid them away and she thought, "It's the love that counts. He'll know about that when these things are yellow with age."

She did not stop sewing after that but turned her attention to simpler things, for the work was a solace. It harmonized with her mood of indifference to everything that concerned her except Toni. She still preferred to be alone and seemed sometimes to be living through the days a passive spectator of her own numbed emotions. There were times when she felt a stirring resentment against

conditions that could produce this apathy in a mind and body that had been responsive to life's least stimulus, and she tried to shake it off; danced, sang, and sometimes was successful, but it was more often at unexpected moments that the apathy left her free to think and feel. Always in these rare intervals of quickened vitality she regretted that in her talk with Dr. Field she had confessed that she wondered sometimes why she had cared so much. It seemed to her that she had voiced an infidelity, had admitted a weakness that would forever remain a burr in the fabric of her memory. It was true, but it would have been better not to admit it; admitting it made it seem portentous, for if she could feel that doubt, what else might she not admit to herself? She tried to close her mind against a possibility so painful and was relieved when the lethargy returned and she found herself once more indifferent and too dull to care. Never since that New Year's Day talk, however, had the confidential note touched their conversations. Dr. Field understood, of course, and she constantly reminded him, for whenever his eyes questioned her she affected not to see.

He continued to call in the evening and always to include Nicolai in their talk, though she knew he was uneasy and only came then because he knew she preferred that he should. Sometimes Nicolai insisted that he stay for pool or to talk and smoke, and at such times she was sorry for him.

Nicolai complained almost with petulance one night of her indifference to the things that once had thrilled her, and Dr. Field listened, his resentment at Nicolai's tone plainly evident in his face.

"It's a price you pay," Field said sharply. "You ought to be glad she is indifferent."

But Nicolai wasn't glad nor did he relish even so brief a reminder from Field, and as spring advanced he grew more restless under the enforced inactivity. He renewed his complaint that Terry could not ride with him and he

never took her to drive that he did not regret grumblingly that they were not in their saddles.

One night—it was the last of March when the air was so soft that the windows of the study were raised a little—Nicolai walked up and down the room in frowning silence. He had been reading and he closed his book and threw it into his chair as he rose. Terry watched him from her place at the writing-table where a letter to her mother was in process of labored composition.

"What's the matter?" she asked at last. She would rather hear him talk than go on with the writing that cost so much effort.

He walked toward her and stopped beside the table. "Let's get out of this town for a while. I am sick of it. I want to go to Asia. You ought to see Constantinople and Bagdad and the Bosphorus. You've never seen the Bosphorus, Terry, on an evening when the light. . . . No words can describe that light that lingers after sunset. When the muezzin cries from the minaret . . . and on the streets the Turks and the Russians and the scattering of French and English officers go gaily about everybody's business but their own. . . . I want to see it. Let's go." His voice was vibrant with desire. "I should have taken you to Asia, got this out of my blood again before Toni put an end to living." He turned and walked away again muttering, but Terry did not try to hear what more he said. She sat gazing into the shadows of the room repeating his words. Over and over she said them. "Before Toni put an end to living." Had Toni put an end to living for him, too? Was he dull and numb and waiting as she waited for something, she knew not what, a cataclysm perhaps, a devastating storm that with flashing lightning and roar would shake all the world into realization of the secret she knew? Was he feeling it threateningly ominous, like the far off roll of thunder? She interrupted him, rose and stepped into his path as he came toward her.

"Are you unhappy?" she asked him curiously.

"I'm sick of winter and of Wisconsin. You aren't particularly lively, you know. We're dead and buried. I want some music, some color and life and movement. What do you say? Let's go to Asia."

Terry continued to look at him, but before answering she turned and closed the ink well on the writing table, laid her pen in the tray, and shifted the paper that lay scattered on the blotter. He waited, watching her immobile face.

"I can't go to Asia," she said quietly, raising her eyes again to his. "It would be impossible . . . now."

"I don't see why. You're perfectly well. You need something to wake you up. You've been walking in your sleep for months."

"I know. . . . But I couldn't go away, Niki. I couldn't, you know."

He turned on his heel and walked from her again. When he reached the farther end of the room he began to talk rumblingly in broken sentences. She knew that he was irritated by her inertia; she shook herself mentally and tried to imagine herself in Asia, in Bagdad, as she thought of the Bosphorus and the light that lingered . . . lovely . . . different. She wanted to go, to see it all, and then she heard what he was saying. ". . . coddling of women is a mistake. Silly nonsense. A pose. Chivalry . . . great-hearted American man stuff! The peasants in Russia work in the fields right up to the minute and an hour later they come back. Doctors in every seaport from here to Asia. You'd be all right. What's the sense in dragging out a year of misery like this? American women . . . lap dogs. Makes me damn tired."

Terry had walked toward him quickly. There was no color in her face and as he looked at her, scowlingly, and saw her kindling eyes he raised his hand in a gesture of annoyance and turning his back on her threw himself into a chair.

"Please say that all over again, Nicolai. I want to understand just what is in your mind."

"You know what's in my mind. I won't repeat anything. You're spoiled. Petted. I'm going to see Field and ask him if you wouldn't be as safe traveling as you are in this tomb." He rose and went into the hall. Terry saw him emerge into the light a minute later in his coat and hat with a walking stick under his arm. "I'm going to see the doctor now," he said to her over his shoulder.

This was one of the moments when the apathy lifted. Terry walked to the window and stood looking out into the night where Nicolai, following the descending road to the city street, swung along, a large, dark figure against the snow.

It was a night of thaw. Through the open window a soft wind fluttered the drapery of her gown and she heard the gurgle of water in the eave troughs. Like stinging pain her thoughts darted and tore at her heart while her body shook with chill. Tears burned in her eyes, tears of anger that was poison in her veins. With every quivering fiber of her suddenly alive being she resented Nicolai's words and his manner and his whole selfish hateful soul. He had said that thing about an end to living as if it had hurt him, had cost him a moment of discomfort, had been imposed on him. That was it, that was the bitterness of it, that her quiet, her patience and waiting should irritate him after . . . after . . . She could not think the words that described the days in October when she had taken the burden of his ambition on her soul.

Why had she done it? Why had she cared what he wanted? Why had she minded the thought of being sent away from him? His description of Constantinople and the Bosphorus rang in her ears. She wanted to see it all. He would leave her and go and yet she might have been free from him, from his blasting selfishness, free to travel and, instead, she had . . . Oh, God! she had chosen this.

She turned from the window and walked about in a

frenzy of rebellion, pulling at her dress, twisting the lace and silk in her desire to tear out of her body the shackling burden that daily, hourly, was pressing her into a very prison of helplessness. It was so slow! Slow as the creeping torture of the rack, certain as death—this Thing that had its talons in her flesh.

She heard the snap and slit of tearing silk, the rougher sound of breaking lace, with a maniacal satisfaction that brought the relief of racking sobs.

Dropping into the big chair that had held Nicolai she lay panting, crying until she was wet with the sweat and tears of remorse. *It couldn't be undone.* There was no road back, no chance for reliving, no way to erase the looming, portentous horror. It was not a deed done, a dark moment that was past. It was still in the doing, growing worse, more unbearable. Every breath she drew added to its life and strength for the tormenting of her. And she had voluntarily, wilfully, determinedly, brought it upon herself. Oh, God, to think of it!

She began to laugh. If she were in prison she could scheme her way out; if she were in a cage she could break her bars, if she were in deep water she could swim. In anything but this she could fight for release. But this, this bondage. . . . There was no way out.

She closed her eyes and her sobs stopped as suddenly as they had begun, while the numbness began gradually to steal over her body and into her mind. She felt it slowly creeping up her arms, across her shoulders, into her eyes. There was stillness, and the fresh current of blowing air on her wet face. She heard the cool drip of melting snow, the gurgle in the eave troughs. Nicolai had lied. "You'll never regret it," he had said. "I'll make it up to you a dozen ways." Promises that interfered with his pleasure. Lies, lies, and tricks to trap her. He would go away. He would go soon—to Asia, to Russia, without her. He would leave her to the terrible loneliness of her own mind. There was nobody to share her thought, none

who could be told or who would understand except the one man and him, above all others, she must never, never tell.

IV

IT was as she had prophesied. Nicolai left her the first day of April. He resented Dr. Field's positive refusal to consent to so long a journey for her and he was irritated still further by the doctor's suggestion that there were places they might visit nearer home. There were California, North Carolina, Atlantic City—any number of resorts for change and recreation. A railroad journey could do no harm, but the Atlantic Ocean. . . . He had shut his lips and refused to reconsider.

It had all been done rapidly. There was no time for regrets or change of plans after the first move was made. Nicolai had arranged his affairs some days before, it seemed, and he had only to telegraph for sailing reservations.

Forty-eight hours after he had first broached the subject he was gone. What she had said to him and which of her mixed emotions was most real, she did not know. She had felt as if, for her, this was the end of life, and she endured his parting kiss with eyes closed to veil the hurt that must be revealingly evident in her look.

Nicolai had been cheerful in his leave-taking. He had talked at the last about the things she must do to while away the weeks of his absence. She must give Clara and the Fields a spree, take them to Chicago for some shows and dinners and she must use the *Russia*. The ice would soon be breaking up and they could have some trips. Lots to do; no excuse for moping. He pinched her cheek.

With note book and pencil in hand he waited for her to tell him what she wanted from Paris and when her desires, usually so lively where things were concerned, dis-

closed no list to write he suggested gifts that he would bring her anyway. It was only a few hours that they were together and the talk was interrupted by packing and dinner and messengers to and from the telegraph office.

She would not go to the train. . . . He kissed her and was gone.

V

IT was not until the second day after his departure that she roused to resistance against the pain that had tightened about her heart. When Nicolai drove away she waited at the drawing room window almost believing that he would return, contrite and remorseful for even having dreamed of leaving her alone. Still hoping, still clinging to her faith in his love, she heard his train rush into the depot; listened for the last whistle as it left the city. Not until the returning car swept around the drive and through the porte-cochère without stopping could she believe that he had actually gone from her.

The next day her heart arrived with him in Chicago, breakfasted and wrote a telegram with him, a telegram that said he was returning immediately. . . .

The telegram came at noon, but not to say he was returning.

She read it while Lena waited to see if there was to be an answer and, smiling up at Lena while the fires of hell raged in her heart, she tore it into ribbons.

It was then that she ran from the house in a passion of despair and walked in the park alone, through snow and mud for miles, resting on bench or log, risking her life as she ran out on the lake where the ice had divided into great creaking cakes. She jumped on the ice, watching the water guzzle up through the crags, feeling a mad pleasure when it sank and slid beneath her weight. She wanted to fling herself into terrible danger that would hurt

more acutely than the knife thrust in her heart, but the threatening cracks held perversely, seemed playfully to reassure her that they were quite to be trusted as if they thought she had come out to frolic with the music of spring in her veins.

Spring! The awakening! Her awakening had come to mock at her, to blaspheme the love she had cherished. Her gift of love was flung back in her face. Nicolai had never wanted her love, cared nothing for her companionship. She had romantically believed that he knew what the word love meant, but he didn't. He never would. She was but an instrument necessary to his ambition, a tool!

Tool . . .

She stopped short in the muddy path staring ahead. She had told Dr. Field he might think of himself as a tool if he wished. In a way, she had said, he was that to her. Had she hurt him as now she was hurt? No. Because he had never had any right to expect love of her, yet perhaps that had not lessened his hurt. Oh, the crafty fellow that was life! A conjurer whose bag was heavy with tricks. Nicolai talked of retributive justice. Was this retributive justice?

She ran along the path, winged, tireless, freed from her body by the intensity of her feeling. Not even when she dressed for dinner was she tired, nor after dinner. She was wound to a high pitch, stimulated, reckless. She must do something this evening that would give vent to the pressure of her spirits. She would like to be on an engine, a railway locomotive, and drive it straight into the dark past signals and warnings with not a desire save for speed and rushing wind, and danger every inch of the way to an end unknown.

She stood in the hall after dinner trying to decide what she should do. There were so few possibilities! The worst and most desperate she considered and abandoned —to send for Dr. Field and ease her own grief by curing

his. No. She would never do that. The thought sobered her and made her ashamed. She would telephone Lyda and try the innocuous solace of her silliness.

Sam, Lyda said, was coming over that evening. They would go on to The Towers if Terry wished, and when they were together think of something to do.

Terry had Carter arrange for champagne and sandwiches and inspect Nicolai's cellaret. Wherever they went, whatever they did they would begin in the study to take on fuel for adventure.

"I feel gay," Terry told them when they came. "I want to do something exciting."

Sam lifted his scalp lock between thumb and finger and pirouetted on the broad toe of his boot. "Let's trim her at poker," he whispered to Lyda, one naughty eye on Terry.

"Dollar limit," Terry said at once. "On-our-honor debts. You won't trim me!"

They played dollar limit and Terry won, kept on winning until she was bored by Sam's expressionless silence and Lyda's complaints. There was no excitement, only greedy gain for her and loss for her friends who could not afford the game as well as she.

"I don't want your money," she cried at last, flinging down her cards. "This isn't fun. Let's dance. I'll go up and put on a dancing dress and we'll have a ballet."

While she was gone Dr. Field came in and when she danced down into the study she found him sitting on the arm of a chair, gravely observant of the scene—the poker chips, the empty glasses, Lyda's laments over her losses, that were addressed to him in a tone that held a criticism of Terry.

He refused to drink. Always he had said something about his principles on drinking, "You know I don't drink," and then he had disposed of all that was given him. Tonight he said nothing, and he did not drink.

Feeling his disapproval, Terry urged them into the ball-

room where after discussing Lyda's limited repertoire, they decided on Chaminade's Scarf Dance to be played over and over with Sam's mouth organ obbligato, while Terry improvised. She switched off all the ceiling lights, leaving only the rosy glow from the cornice and a pair of torchères.

When she stepped down from the dais where Lyda and Sam struck an orchestral pose, she heard Dr. Field say earnestly as he moved toward her, "Don't do it. Don't dance," and for answer she blew him a professional kiss, and the words, "I . . . must . . ." formed soundlessly on her lips.

She danced as if she must. Sculpture in transition; winds of spring and wraith of mist; the whirling of leaves and the flight of birds. Once she sank as softly in the gloom as a dropping petal and rose again like a flower growing before their eyes. After the first few minutes Sam's mouth organ expired. He stood gazing through the tinted dimness, and when Lyda reached a stopping place he whispered to her, "Play a waltz," and dashed out on the floor.

Terry lifted her arms and he swung her circling, reversing, swaying in entirely original movements that he invented—fruit of an inspired moment. For a while Terry seemed as tireless as a butterfly and as light, but suddenly she stopped, swayed back arm's length from Sam and gave him her hands.

"I'm done, Sammy. I've danced all the gaiety out."

They went into the drawing room and Lyda tried to revive the tone of recklessness on which they had begun their evening, but it was gone. Terry was like an extinguished lamp; Sam watched her with a startled curiosity as if he had discovered a mystery, and Dr. Field, who from the first had held a chilly reserve, did not unbend.

It was he who first rose to go. He looked at his watch, exclaimed that it was late and moved briskly toward the hall. Terry said nothing to detain him and Lyda, lifting

a supercilious eyebrow, decided that they "might as well move along too."

Terry sat huddled in a hall chair while they put on their coats, but when they went out through the porte-cochère she stood in the open door and lifted her face to the wind's soft blowing and opened her arms to receive the night's caress. She heard Sam and Lyda slam the car door on the clatter of a quarrel; saw Dr. Field walk toward his shining runabout and stop in its shelter to light a cigarette. She wanted to call him back, but it was no use. The loneliness had just begun; it would go on tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. . . .

She turned slowly, but hesitated on the threshold, dreading the ominous stillness that awaited her. When Nicolai was in the house his personality filled it with magnetic vibrations that she felt with a sixth sense; the house never seemed too large when he was in it, but when she was alone and lonely she was lost in its echoing immensity.

There was nothing for her now except to go up to bed. For ten long weeks she must creep between the linen sheets with their significant wreathed N's, while the taffeta on the next bed continued undisturbed. She couldn't bear it—the desolation—to go to bed night after night with that silent witness to her desertion! She would have Nicolai's bed taken away in the morning and the furniture so arranged that it would not be missed.

She looked back at her departing friends. Dr. Field's car had darted around Sam's and disappeared down the drive, and now, with Lyda waving, the Caulkins' Cadillac chugged slowly away and was lost in the silence. She watched until the tail light disappeared and was about to go inside when the headlights of another car flashed up the hill. At once she knew. It was Dr. Field returning. She stepped into the hall and held the door as if to close it but hesitated, watching the speed with which he swung into the porte-cochère, shut off his engine and came dash-

ing up to the door. He walked in, already beginning to take off his coat, but stopped abruptly when his eyes met hers.

He had come back with this manner of assurance. . . . Why? With a chill of horror she saw herself in that moment with terrible honesty, an extreme honesty that reached beyond the mark. She saw herself a depraved woman who had taken a lover without the courage to admit that it was as a lover that she had taken him, and now he was telling her that he knew, that he was not deceived by her.

Something in her look had checked his eager speed, for he stood transfixed as if he expected her to speak, yet began himself, hesitatingly. "I came to see you, but there was no use with those two here. I had to get rid of them."

"I know."

Self-defense, the habit of hiding from her own soul's eyes, the memory of her great despair rushed over the exposure to comfort her. The naked thing she had seen was clothed once more in the garments of justification. She felt relief. Nerves played sorry tricks, she told herself, and her nerves were sore. She drew a long breath and bit her lip against the tears that started suddenly as she said, "Shall we go into the study?"

VI

THEY could see that Carter was in the study setting it to rights, and Field's inquiring look asked her if she wanted to go where he seemed only to have begun his work. She gave no sign that she had seen his question, but went on, glad for Carter's presence and said as she entered the room, "Carter won't mind having us talk in here, will you, Carter?" and to Field, to test him, "He'll give you anything you like to drink."

Field hesitated, smiling at Carter who waited expectantly for an order. "A highball?" he said with polite inflection but glanced at Terry, who was watching him, and changed his mind hastily, "Nothing, thank you. Nothing at all."

Terry dropped down into Nicolai's largest chair and Field stood before her. "I came here to see you this afternoon and Lena told me you had gone out to walk. You had been gone two hours then. I waited thinking surely you would be tired enough to come home, but you did not come. I was worried about you. I'm worried now."

"I had to walk. I wanted to be tired."

Carter began to close windows to shut out the wind that was blowing the smoke-heavy air about. Terry thought the gray clouds were like flocks of sheep and the wind a lively dog that ran among them.

"Did it bring relief?"

"Relief? My walk? A little."

"You are thinner. Do you eat?"

"Sometimes."

Making a hasty end of the room's reordering, Carter took up a tray of glasses. "I'm leaving, Mrs. Karanoff, is there anything you'd like?"

Terry thought, "I'd like you to stay here near me," but she said, vaguely, "Nothing. Good night," and to Field, as Carter left the room, "Nicolai . . . is gone."

"I know."

They were alone. Field drew a small chair close to the large one where she was curled with her feet under the brief skirt of her dancing dress. His manner reflected her own now. He was direct, grave, the curtains of reserve drawn over his eyes. Perhaps she had mistaken his haste for an assurance he had not felt. That was one of her fears—that he was not yet convinced of her abhorrence of even a glance of familiarity between them.

He was saying, "He told you, I suppose, about our talk. I tried to keep him here."

"Yes. You suggested some place in the United States. He hated the thought."

"There was no doubt of that. Now tell me, what are you going to do about having a companion? He thought your mother would come to you."

Terry lifted her head indignantly. "Nicolai? He could not have thought such a thing! Mama's playing in Aunt Mabel's company; she couldn't come. I shan't even let her know Nicolai is gone."

"I see. How about Clara? She could be with you at night."

"No. Not Clara. . . ."

"Why? Clara would be safe and sane. And she is full of life."

"Did I seem tonight to need life?"

"No." His look searched into the misty eyes she lifted. "What is it you need then?" he asked finally.

Terry studied the palm of her hand as if on its soft pinkness she found the answer. "I need peace . . ." she whispered, "and a complete forgetting . . . and . . ."

"What?"

She shook her head and would not continue. He waited a moment before saying in a lower tone, as if he hesitated to encroach on possible reserves, "On New Year's Day you told me that sometimes you wondered . . ."

"I know. I remember. I regretted that for a long time afterward, regretted that I had said such a thing. It seemed to me the greater infidelity . . . then. But now I understand."

"What is it you understand?"

"Don't you know? Must I explain every thought I have to make you see how it is with me?" A worried frown darkened her face. She wanted him to know, but the explaining was so difficult.

"I'm afraid you do have to tell me your mental processes step by step," he said gently. "You are so differ-

ent; you think differently. You arrive at your conclusions by a route I have never traveled in my own affairs. I never know what you are going to say."

"You don't really mean that! I only do what any one else would do in the same circumstances."

His quick laugh was pleasant to hear; it brought a smile to her eyes.

"Never! I don't know anybody that is like you or who would do what you do."

"Do you know anybody with a problem like mine?"

"No. Bless you, I don't. But then neither do I know anybody whose philosophy—or religion—so . . . well . . . supports their decisions, or comforts them as yours does you."

Terry was looking at him, suspicious at once of a criticism behind the words.

"It appears," she said, "that my religion is unusual. One day I talked about it to Clara and since then she argues all the time with me. She kept talking about Christians, Christians, and I was impatient and said, 'But why always quote Christ! Why not quote Mahommedans? Has God ever said which he prefers? Has God ever said he prefers our kind of Western morality to the Eastern?' Clara was horrified and lost her temper. She insists on losing her temper when we discuss religion. I told her I had heard Aunt Mabel say once that of all the people Christ knew He was easiest, gentlest with those who did what Clara poetically calls the scarlet sin! He was lovely to ever so many of them because he understood, Aunt Mabel said, but he raised the very roof over the men who charged too high interest for money. Clara flatly says that wrong is wrong and right is right and that there are no extenuating circumstances for doing wrong. She would rather a woman died in the gutter than save herself and others by what she calls 'wrong.' "

"What do you call it?" Field asked curiously.

"I? Why . . . the unconventional thing! Different

things at different times, but not always wrong by any means. The test is one of purpose, isn't it? Aren't there all sorts of shades of good and bad? One may do a thing that is very nearly wrong, that might look bad to other eyes, but that to the understanding eye is the lesser evil. You believe that, don't you?"

"Yes . . . and no." He pushed back his chair and rose. She asked him difficult questions; her insistence backed him into a corner! She was lonely tonight, deserted; she had felt a mad recklessness. Her need was for comfort, for love such as he could give her and had the right to give her, yet he knew with every trained fiber of his thought that as her physician he must keep her at peace with her own conscience. To let her start now on soul-searching while she was desolate would be enough to unbalance her. If she could admit that she loved him, accept his love, she could rest in the rightness of their bond, if not . . .

He turned to draw his chair forward again, sat down and began earnestly, "Terry, I can't talk this thing with you and stay impersonal. Nothing about you is wrong in my eyes. Surely you don't think that I could, that I would judge you, do you? I? Think what you are asking me." He reached forward and took her hands, held them close and waited for her to lift her eyes, but she could not look up, and after a moment he went on. "If Clara did certain things she would be as wrong as possible, but you were brought up very differently from Clara . . . and from me too. We were trained, ten commandments, psalms . . . all that. We spoke pieces in Sunday school and were given Bibles for regular attendance while you were . . . what were you doing Sundays while we did that?"

"I was at a matinee every Sunday afternoon, if that's what you mean."

"Yes, that's what I mean. You see we would naturally look at things differently."

"Oh, then you do agree with Clara! I see that you do!" She had cornered him. On New Year's Day he had shown her, and by showing her had thrown her into painful confusion, that he did not believe her when she said that she loved her success and felt no sympathy with Victor Hugo's "success is hideous." Either he didn't know his own mind or he said each time what it pleased him to say. But she could not speak of that; she would not embarrass him so.

"I don't judge you. I . . . my feeling for you . . ." he was saying, but as she didn't want to hear about his feeling for her, she interrupted. "You think, like Clara, that I am pagan?"

"Let's not put it that way. Let's say rather that the queen can do no wrong."

He had hurt her. He saw her eyes contract. He had flattered her when she had begged for honesty. He parted his lips to explain further, but he realized that unless he told her exactly how he did feel about her he could not do better than he had already, he would make things worse. He still leaned far forward holding her hands, one in each of his own, intensely conscious of her expressive face. She was thinking rapidly, looking directly at him as if she were trying to see him better.

"What is it?" he asked, alarmed by the subtle shifting of light in her eyes.

She began slowly, choosing her words with care. "If you think as Clara does. If you were trained that way, so that morality is not just a matter of custom but of badness no matter what the circumstances, then you must have been feeling dreadfully about it all, and you didn't tell me."

"There is nothing for me to tell you," he protested, shocked by the possibilities he sensed in her mood. If she should begin to make herself over, God alone knew what terrible disaster might come upon them! He must do his utmost to keep her at peace with her own soul, for

if she should see with Clara's eyes, her first move would of course be to cast him out utterly, then to make confession to Nicolai! Any madness could follow on a frenzy for reform, and she was mentally so wounded and physically so wretched now as to be perfect material for maniacal self-flagellation.

Earlier in the evening he had thought his moment for showing her her own heart—himself at its center—had come. He had returned for that purpose, but if he lost forever all chance with her, he must persuade her now to cling to her original philosophy.

He began to talk, hardly knowing how he was going to manage the thing he must do.

"I am not feeling dreadful at all," he began vehemently. "Not the least, nor must you. One may have moral scruples without being a Clara, you know. You have a very strong, a very brave philosophy. It shouldn't be called a religion at all. It is the philosophy of the great world and takes a tremendous courage on your part. You must continue to hold firm, to remember that you did what in your conscience was right for all concerned. Hang on to that. Don't discuss these questions with Clara. You must go on living with yourself. Aren't you courting trouble by allowing yourself to doubt?"

The color had faded from her face; her eyes darkened as she drew back from him. "Even though you think I am wrong, you want me to continue that way."

"I want to turn the light on your ghosts and show you that they are nothing but shadows."

"They would not be ghosts or shadows to you if you were I."

"They would. So long as you have not changed in your belief or in your purpose you have no business with these questions."

"Ah, now I agree with you. Now we agree. That is just the trouble. I have . . . changed."

"Toward Nicolai? Toward me? What do you mean?"

He was stammering in his confusion, terrified because he saw that in her lovely little person which he had idealized as a flower, as the red, red rose of his heart, was the lightly leashed power of death and eternal destruction. If she had need, as erring human beings sometimes did have need, to crucify herself, she would destroy him with her. As certainly as Nicolai breathed he would kill him. Extenuating circumstances! Little attention a Nicolai would give to the extenuating circumstances. . . .

Field walked the length of the room and back to the table where he pushed a pile of magazines into disorder while the blood roared in his ears and a red mist danced before his eyes. He had forgotten that he had asked her a question, but he went back to her and dropped on one knee before the deep chair in which she was still curled, drooping with weariness yet controlled and aware of every move he made. Her eyes were judging him; he could make no appeal on the ground of danger to himself or her. She had lost all sense of danger.

"Terry. . . . " He took her hands again, and because he was completely at a loss for a strong argument and had need for gaining time, he lifted one to his lips. With that touch his inspiration came. "Terry," he began again and was able to keep his voice low and his speech gently deliberate, "if you love Toni, if you want to do the brave and beautiful thing for him, you will stop thinking these things. Toni didn't ask to come to this world. He had no choice, but you do have the chance to choose whether or not you will give him a square deal. He needs to have you happy, brave and serene in your thoughts. All those things you naturally are; they aren't much for him to ask of you, are they?"

Her lips moved to form the word "no," and he saw a mist of tears brighten her eyes. "Won't you keep your thoughts on Toni? Forget about Nicolai and Clara and me and all these harassing problems. At least Nicolai won't be a danger while he is gone. On New Year's Day

you were aware of danger and, desolate though you are now, you are relieved of that."

"Yes."

"And I am trying not to trouble you with the talk you forbade. I, too, will think only of Toni's good."

"Is that a promise?"

"A promise."

Her eyes were closed, her wet cheek near his, and he could feel the warmth of her shoulder through his coat as he knelt there, bending close to her. They were whispering because they were tired, and because they had come to tears in their struggle.

Terry had slipped back into the familiar stillness where she was alone with Toni, and she was glad for the sorry peace of it. Not once in three long days had she had the solace of its refuge. She had seen, too, for the first time evidence that Dr. Field thought of Toni with concern for his own separate good. It was right of him to remind her; it was beautiful of him and generous, but she had one last thing to tell him.

She stirred, sighing, and drew back from him. "Even though I am to think only of Toni for a while, please don't forget that I have changed, and you have helped to change me. You taught me that success may be hideous and you have made me see that my standards are somehow wrong. If I am wiser for the change, I have you to thank for it."

That was what he had done for himself! In trying to win her by showing her how fine he was, how worthy, he had blundered between his ideals and his failures until he had awakened in her not love for himself, but love for the standards which he himself found impossible of attainment!

When he was out in the night again he looked back at the house and cursed himself for a fool.

VII

THE first crocuses were in bloom and the sunlight was a pale gold in the room on a morning in April when Lena brought the mail to Terry. As she handed her a package of letters with one postmarked New York on top—that Terry saw was addressed in Miss Spencer's peculiar hand—she said that Dr. Field had arrived at the same moment the postman had rung, and was waiting downstairs. Terry looked at the letter curiously and saw that there was one under it from Nicolai, but laid them aside as she told Lena to send Dr. Field up. He found her comfortably pillowed in a chaise longue that stretched its length across two windows where a plant basket of spring flowers received the morning sun. The young man entered, rubbing his hands, and exclaimed over the scene before him.

"Well, this looks like summer. You won't believe how cold I am. It is altogether too nippy for the middle of April." He took his patient's proffered hand and perfunctorily felt her pulse. "I could smell those flowers as I came upstairs. The fragrance of your presence! What a delightful spot this is in which to pretend you are sick."

"I'm no pretender. I am ministering to my young friend, Dr. Field, by staying here." She lifted a cushion and revealed the satin head of the Boston terrier asleep beside her. "I was going out to welcome the first crocuses, but Dr. Field went to sleep and I don't dare disturb him."

Field laughed, but he was thinking, "She's different this morning. Her eyes have lost their haunted look."

And Terry was telling herself as she watched him. "Dr. Field is happy this morning. His face is less terribly troubled than it was."

Aloud they were talking as any two young people might talk on a crisp morning of early spring, about dogs.

"He is so sensitive," she was saying about the Boston terrier, "and so gentle. Only a lover of animals can understand how I feel about him. They wrote us from the kennels that we must never whip him. He mustn't be scolded hard either. If he chews something, for instance, we must tie the thing around his neck and make him wear it as punishment."

Field nodded solemnly. "That dog is rightly named for me," he said. "I am exactly like that. Even a frown, even a little frown like yours, wounds me terribly."

"Poor you," Terry sympathized mockingly, "I worry about you, but that name! Doesn't it seem dreadful to have a valuable dog named *Doc?*"

"I don't know. That name is worth a great deal to me. I find myself feeling very respectful of it. Everywhere I go I hear that Mr. Karanoff has named a five thousand dollar pup for me—because he is so astounded by my skill! They all talk about it. Would you like to have a list of the Great and Only of the Smart Set who have entrusted their livers and tonsils to my care?"

This was the reason for the change in the doctor; he was busy and wanted.

Terry was glad. Field saw in her eyes the light that was happiness for his sake and saw the color flush her cheeks when he said, "I owe everything to you. I never forget that. People question me about you and you are copied in more ways than you have any idea. I want you to know that I am proud of our friendship. What's that quotation about ingratitude being intolerable? It's from *As You Like It*, isn't it?"

Terry gave it to him, thrilled that their talk should be so to her liking, and when they had done with the bandying of quotations she said, remembering that he had offered a list of new patients, "Tell me about the Great and Only of the Smart Set."

"Well, there's old Madame King's beloved gall stone colic. You may have heard . . ."

"Gracious, yes," Terry cried. "Don't *you* begin to tell me her symptoms!"

He laughed happily. "And there is Captain Rich, and the Newcombs all have the grippe, and the Masons and the McLeans have just discovered that they never did trust Dr. Bennig . . . The medical department at the mills is busy. I am going to write Mr. Karanoff a report. What do you hear from him?"

"I had a cable yesterday from Port Said. He is going to stop in Cairo for a few days. He loves it all, you know. I have a letter here from Paris."

The mention of Karanoff had brought a subtle change to Terry's face. Field saw the tightening of her mouth and she shuffled the letters that she had forgotten till he questioned her. She did not look at him.

"I suppose he has some sort of party, hasn't he," he asked, "to travel with?"

Terry's hands came together in the gesture he had learned to associate with her tense moments. "I am not sure . . . I feel certain he is not alone."

Her voice was quiet and she spoke without emotion, but Field heard another and a different thought that somehow traveled, with her words, to him, as if he had heard with another organ of sense than his ears.

"He seems happy," she continued, and still she did not look at him. "His letters are filled with his ironical jokings, and he tells me of gifts he has bought for me. . . ."

"Things you need, of course."

"I could manage to go through the summer without them. I wish he wouldn't buy them. I think he cables me whenever he happens to think of me."

"Isn't that a pretty soft snap for the cable company?"

Terry shook her head, but she did not smile and she did not look up, yet during that call Field felt that her apathy had passed, that she was awake to conditions and was meeting them, not as horrors of a nightmare, but as facts that she must adapt herself to with the least pos-

sible degree of emotion and all of resolution she could command. He still deplored his own folly for letting her see that he had not believed that she was satisfied with her success, for until he had quoted Victor Hugo she had never dreamed that success could fail to bring happiness. He had kept his promise to her scrupulously, since he had been alarmed by signs of change in her, and had met her half way on every impersonal topic she introduced for discussion, and had conscientiously tried to set a guard upon his thoughts.

Even with Nicolai's intimidating presence a diminishing restraint, he did not try to plan how he was to achieve the miracle of transferring Terry from Nicolai's possessive grasp to his own. That, he decided, was on the knees of the gods. Nicolai might be shipwrecked (a pleasant possibility), might die conveniently, might threaten Terry with divorce again—he could only hope. Surely the gods loved him or they would never have given Terry to him in the first place, and, in the meantime, he must do his utmost to make her believe in him, depend on him, recognize the love for him that he was certain was still in large part both cause and motive for her action. She was traveling a long road alone, and he understood with the best that was in him—his love for her—that she could not speak even to him of the sloughs and pitfalls, the ogres and giants, along the way.

Her manner toward him was exactly as it had always been save in the few talks when they had bared their fears and differences. Her voice and eyes were warm with friendliness, yet they held a reserve that was unmistakable in the limitations it laid down for him.

There had been times, he admitted, when he had been positively palsied by fear of Nicolai, but gradually something of her stillness was transmitted to him, until he had begun to feel in his sentimental moments that he and she were waiting in an antechamber of life, their listening ears tuned for the tolling of a bell that was to be their signal.

When the bell tolled Terry herself would open the door for him and they would pass from the antechamber together.

To Terry the subtle, sympathetic quality of his deeper understanding was peace and comfort. His call was the sustaining hour of her day. She looked forward to it eagerly and planned what she would say and how she might detain him. She bore many a trifling ill rather than be a sick thing in his eyes, and through it all she marveled at herself and at him to think they could share a poignant memory and yet that they could meet with no visible evidence of the personal other than the flaring torch in his eyes, the radiant silences. For her life had become, as the numbing lethargy of the winter passed slowly from her, a netted complexity.

She tried at times to grasp a thread and follow it through the tangle to a conclusion, but the knottings and criss-cross of other threads wearied her. There was no solution, nothing but a mass of interwoven emotions that held her prisoner.

There were days when Nicolai receded and became unreal like a voice that is carried on the wind and all but lost. She could not find him sometimes when she searched for the consciousness of his aliveness, and there was a night when panic seized her for fear he was dead. Between them a door had closed perhaps. He was shut away from her by . . . what? Not distance, not indifference surely, but perhaps by some person who shared his travel or . . . She closed her mind to that suspicion, closed it successfully she thought, until some written word or wave of thought made an entering wedge of doubt again.

VIII

IT was some time after Dr. Field left her before Terry remembered the letters. She reached first for her aunt's and was about to draw it from the envelope when she realized that she had chosen it in preference to Nicolai's. She hesitated, looking down at the Paris postmark, her hands poised while she made deliberate choice, then slowly she turned from Nicolai's note to the bulky missive from New York.

Dearest Terry,

It is after nine o'clock and much too late for me to begin a letter but I am too excited to sleep and will tell you all that has happened while I am quivering with my desire to telegraph you to come at once. Gus Samuels has come over to us. He has met the highest terms I named more than a year ago and he wants you now for rehearsals. After all my dreams for you the thing I wanted most has happened. Gus has found a play that is new and different. The star rôle is a part as certainly written for you as if your warmest admirer (myself) had planned it. *Helena* is a young dancer, new school preferred. The part calls for a young woman; there are several dances introduced and they must be done right. It is a vehicle that calls for nobody I know in this world but you, and Gus realizes that himself, though he is much too shrewd to say so outright. He came to my dressing room after the second act tonight and, behaving as casual as if he only wanted to borrow a postage stamp, began to talk about you. I was careful to tell him nothing, for I felt that his manner was covering some excitement. At last after trying to find out how happy you are and all about it he said, 'You tell Terry that if she is tired of her Russian to come to New York and we'll put her on in something new.' Then he told me about it and after the performance we came up here and read the play together. It is unusual, sparkling, and will go over I am certain if you are *Helena*. Oh, Terry, my dear, you have had your love and your honeymoon; can't you see your way back to me now?

I don't forget your important engagement in July, but I think Gus could be bullied into having you learn your lines there at home and come on for rehearsals when you are able. You will be well quickly, I am sure of it, and with nurses to take the care of the infant off you, it would be perfectly possible.

Why haven't you written us that Nicolai is in Europe? I have a letter today from Alice. She saw him in Paris with his party at dinner somewhere, and later, at the theatre. I say 'party' assuming that there are several of them. She mentioned only Fanny Reeves, however, whom Alice and I and you too (if you were old enough to understand then), remember very unpleasantly. Nicolai was pointed out to Alice as the Russian-American 'millionaire' who had married my niece. Alice's informers thought Fanny was you. Naturally I dislike that exceedingly, and no doubt you do too. Why has he gone at this critical time in your career? Who else is in his party? Your mother is sick with worry over the fact that you are alone and have not told her.

But, Terry. Pause before you answer this. Take a walk or sleep on it and don't you turn down this chance until you are sure you are really and forever done with the stage. This is your opportunity. You have been married now almost a year and a half. You have loved and quarreled and hated and made up and you have probably by this time had the iron of matrimony pressed into your soul's soul. Are you happy? Ask yourself that. Do you want to go on in a baronial castle playing to an audience of one? Can you turn your back on all the future of success, your beauty and fascination recognized, your brain alive and doing? You will go up and up in the theatre if you seize your chance now.' And yet to think you may still be too young to appreciate your gifts, your youth and beauty and that marvelous magnetism that kings with their treasure cannot buy! I can't say more. Telegraph me. If you will take it 'yes' is enough for me. If you won't take it I can't stand more than the one word *'no.'*

Yours always, with love,
Mabel.

Nicolai and Fanny Reeves, the opportunity she must accept or refuse now, perhaps forever, stirred Terry to a

pitch of excitement that was almost illness. She knew Fanny Reeves' name, but an elusive memory of something whispered and unpleasant was all she could recall. She tried to remember facts and was baffled by flashing memories that seemed to suggest a tall young woman with light hair and dark-lashed eyes. It didn't matter how she looked nor who she was, she was with Nicolai. It was she whom Terry had felt between her and Nicolai; it was she who had closed the door between them these dreary weeks . . .

Terry walked the floor of her room pressing her hands together, hardly able to breathe. She could not think, she could only feel desolation pushing her out of Nicolai's life, away from her home, back into a yawning pit of pain and illness where she would be alone, always alone in the darkness. Her feet were traveling that steep descent; her world was slipping away from her like shifting sand. All that she had tried to make secure she was losing, all that and more, for Nicolai was faithless. He had really deserted her in her time of need. . . .

She knew Lena ran into the room and tried to stop her agonized pacing, that she questioned her and finally led her to the chaise longue, and though she begged to be left alone she heard Lena telephoning for Dr. Field.

By the time he arrived she was quieter. She had struggled for control. Sitting alone she had closed her eyes and drawn as long breaths as the trembling of her body would permit. She saw Nicolai's letter and, taking it up, broke the seal with agitated hands. Before she reached the end of the several pages written almost illegibly in a heavy sprawling hand, Field walked quickly into the room. She rose and looked into his questioning eyes with an expression so hostile that he exclaimed, "What has happened?"

"This has happened." She thrust Nicolai's letter toward him. "And this has happened." She stooped and picked up her aunt's letter. "And I want to know what is the first, the very first minute you can get me well."

She lifted her face to him and her eyes flashed through a mist of drying tears, but by an effort of will she held her lips firm above the quiver of her chin. There was no doubt that anger struggled with grief in her emotions.

Field looked at the letters in his hand; looked into her eyes and sat down deliberately on the chaise longue.

"Tell me all about it," he said quietly. "This letter is from Nicolai. What has he done?"

"Read my aunt's first," Terry said. "Or no. Give it to me. I will read it to you myself."

She sat down beside him and opened Miss Spencer's letter. She read it in a voice that trembled at times and failed; she paused to make brief comment, and once she blinked away a sudden rush of tears, but she went through to the end. Field listened intently, watching her; his heart was racing. This was the tolling of the bell. Terry's hand was groping for his already. She would look to him now for solace and they would pass out into life together.

She had finished her aunt's letter. "Tell me when I will be well. When may I promise to be in New York?"

"Terry!" Field leaned toward her and gathered her cold little hands in his. "Wait. You mustn't go so fast. You are angry and hurt over Nicolai and this Reeves, but —this stage business, Terry. You aren't thinking of that, are you?"

"Yes. Yes, certainly. What else is there for me? Oh, Harry, think what Nicolai has done. After last fall and his threat and his anger . . . he has gone away from me. He has taken her with him. . . . I knew he had. I knew somebody was with him. I have felt it. I lost him and I couldn't find him. It was as if he were dead and never would come back. How much does he care for Toni that he could do this, deliberately, day after day?" She took her hands from his clasp and bowed her head upon them. "What can I do but take this offer? Would you have me stay here for him to come back to? He says in this letter

that he compares other women to me. Never again, never . . . never! I see now, what I should have seen last October. . . . Tell me if you know; why did I care so much?"

She covered her face with her hands and her voice dropped to a sobbing whisper. "I remember the day in your office when you were so angry your eyes snapped and you asked me why I didn't welcome divorce from such a husband. . . . I was blind and deaf then to everything but the strange, terrible love I had for him. Think what I did to keep him! Sometimes I almost die with remorse. Sometimes it seems like an ugly dream that can't be true of me who always wanted to be good—and yet it is true, and now I am being punished and punished and driven away from all I wanted so to keep . . ."

She turned from him, her face still covered. "I thought that October night that my plan was so *simple*. We would help each other and bury the memory. I thought . . . I supposed, that the one price I was sure to pay for success would be the loss of your . . . respect. I thought you'd grow to hate me and that Nicolai would love me more. But I've hurt you, and I've lost him. I've lost him, and I hate him. At last . . . at last . . . I hate him."

Field had bent toward her, his arms raised to clasp her, but he held them so and did not touch her. When her voice broke she swayed with silent sobs. He half rose then and turned her about, gathering her close against his shoulder as he knelt before her. She made no sound, but he could feel her trembling.

"Terry . . ." he begged softly. "Terry, dear . . . listen to me. Let me help you. I can't bear to have you take it so hard. It isn't a disaster that has come to you. It's a release. Terry . . . Oh, God, I can't think of anything to say except that I love you. I love you so awfully. I knew this would come; I knew you were on this road to me." All the suppressed passion, all the untold story of his starved love were loosed at last, and he

talked, finding words a medium of relief, that acted on his imagination like wine. He had never loved her as he loved her while he told her about it; he had never sensed her sweetness, her exquisite youth, as he sensed them when with the enchantment of memory and with her face framed in his circling hands, he described her beauty as he saw it with enamored eyes.

He went back to the morning in the woods when she had come like an angel of deliverance; to the evening by the fire when she had given him sympathy and hope; he told her how he had loved her qualities then, the heart of her and the soul. She had changed the world for him that night, and then the next day in his office the wonder of her had grown on him. Trite phrases he used, lover phrases that had no sound of triteness to the ears for which they were meant. "You thought I would hate you; that you would have to pay by losing my respect! Terry, you darling. You don't know your own adorable dearness, nor how good I knew you to be before ever you asked me to help you."

When they were calmer he talked of Nicolai as an alien from their little circle, as one having no place with the three that belonged each to the other, blood-bound, secretly but forever indissolubly.

When he had finished all that had crowded through a long winter to be said, Terry was quieter. She drew herself away from him, and he let her go from his arms, but he laid her back in her chair and sat beside her holding her cold hand between his own pressing palms.

IX

IT was not long until they were able to talk about Mabel's offer, "this stage business," Field insisted upon calling it. He understood her need for independence and her desire to lose herself in another interest, but how it was to be accomplished under the circumstances he could not see.

"I am strong," Terry cried. "I will get well fast. All professional women take chances. Can't we hurry it and get it over?"

He smiled, loving her. "You couldn't count on being able to go on the stage before October. It wouldn't be possible, and even then . . . I don't see how you can."

Terry turned her face into the pillow, too spent to answer him with argument. Her body tingled dully and she could hardly raise the hand that held her crumpled handkerchief.

Field, his elbows on his knees, sat watching her. His face was whiter than her own; his eyes looked dark and deep under his drawn brows. She had not responded to his pleading, but she had not repulsed him. She had listened and grown quiet as he talked. He knew he must not expect too much at first. She was being swept by emotions so complex that she could hardly distinguish between them in the excitement of the hour. He felt, reluctantly, that she would not be satisfied until she had disciplined herself, and she would yet go from him into the world of the footlights, perhaps to the stimulation and joy of success. The years, as he looked down them, stretched into the gray distance of hope deferred, yet he believed that, in time, she would come back to him to whom, surely, she belonged. He took her hand again and she stirred.

"Read Nicolai's letter," she said.

He unfolded it and slowly deciphered it.

Nicolai had written nothing that need alarm Terry or that could be construed as evidence of Miss Reeves' presence. The tone of the letter with its assumption of her undying devotion and obedience, his admonitions and patronizing observations upon her art as a dancer, was odious to Field. He had seen some professionals in Paris, and he compared her to them and to all the women he met, always to her advantage, he said. As to the dancing; "I think you lack much as yet in muscular control, but that is of no importance. You dance for love of it and to give me pleasure. That is the point. But I would like you to work up a little on technique later. . . ." He described gifts he had bought her, "an ermine evening coat, but much better than that, the luxury supreme of Paris. It is an Hispano-Suiza car, flower of those medieval craftsmen who brought damascened plate-armor to perfection; the men of Cordova who made their leather renowned; and Toledo steel. . . . But you don't know anything about Toledo steel, Terry." He closed with brief commands along several lines, and peremptory orders for her to write longer letters.

Odious! It was worse than odious, Field said, and made him hot with anger. He stuffed the letter into its envelope and tossed it to the table. "Is that the sort of thing he has been writing you?"

"That's the sort of thing he always writes. That's the way he talks and lives."

"You poor little girl! And you thought you had love and companionship. You haven't had anything but 'the luxuries supreme of Paris,' cushioned ease, perfumed security, gold, gold and more gold. Does my life look empty to you? Can't you face it? Does it hurt so to let go of all this?"

"That is my struggle," she said slowly. "To be willing to let go of it all. I don't think of it that way—'gold, gold and more gold.' It is home to me. I love it all,

the beautiful park, the lake, Melody who knows me. This dear big house . . . My dreams are here. It has been everything." The words came so quietly that he bent forward to hear her. Her eyes were closed. "I have been sold to luxury by my love of it. I have cheated Nicolai to keep this luxury. I've lied to myself because I love luxury. I have hurt you—these are my sins. You mustn't offer me a place in your life. I must go first to that other life that I ran away from. I want to earn my self-respect. I want to earn every soft beautiful thing I have as Mabel has earned hers, and know I have a right to it. I want to give you the chance to forget me, to leave you free. You see, you see . . ."

He interrupted. Striving to keep his voice in control, he made vehement argument against her. She had not cheated Nicolai. She had earned everything Nicolai had given her; she was not sold to luxury. She could never make him forget her nor ever willingly release her. "I need you; I want you," he pleaded. "You ought not to want me to forget, because it is right that I should love you. But how dare I ask you to leave this for me?" He looked about the beautiful room and immediately answered his own question. "It's because I know the soul and heart of you; you love to give, you are generous and fine and you would find in my life endless opportunity for living. Living, Terry, not pampered existence. . . ." His voice ceased, for the pendulum had swung. He felt the silence of the room press him away from her, back into that ante-room of waiting. It would be a long time yet; she was not ready. He had been free to love her without reservation, but she had yet to close the door upon this first love and then, to lose the key. She was not ready for him.

How still the room was. From the lower hall he heard an infantile bark and a few words in Lena's scolding voice. Then silence. In the flower boxes the tulips and narcissus bloomed gayly, untouched by the emotion that

had swept like a storm about them. They received the sun's bright beaming with radiant insouciance, and passed it on to the white-faced man with the added gift of their fragrance and color. He turned from them. Terry moved, and he saw that she was looking at him.

"I am going to ring for Lena," he said rising. "And have her put you to bed. You must be very quiet. You mustn't worry, not about anything. When you are better write to your aunt and have her get all the information she can through her Alice in Paris. Get evidence of Nicolai's misdeeds, and I shall make plans to have you taken away from here. You can't stay here. Nicolai might come home. I would rather have you go out of my care than risk that."

"Where could I go?"

"To a sanitarium, near your mother, perhaps. But there is no need for hurry." He put his finger on the bell.

"Wait!" Terry stopped him. She sat up and pushed the hair back from her forehead as she lifted her tear-marked face to his in the appealing way he loved. "I want to tell you one thing before you go. I want you to know that in all my thought, in all that I suffer," she began haltingly, whisperingly, "always, always I thank God that it was to you I went. . . . I didn't suppose you would care for me. One of the punishments I must take is knowing that I hurt you. Won't you try to forget me? I can't go into your life without trying first to cut all the threads that bind us. If it is possible for you to forget me, I want you to forget me."

It was hard to refrain from pleading, but he must go away from her realizing that she was right. She would try to cut the threads that bound them. She would try absence, silence, time, and if then he could prove to her that nothing she could do to alienate him from her would succeed, she would return to him. At last Nicolai had given her just cause for the very thing he desired—divorce with a settlement sufficient to save her from want in her

life with him. That surely was enough for one day; he must be content to believe that the rest would follow.

X

DAFFODILS edging the sun-bathed lawn; tiny buds in the lace of the trees; music of waterfall joyous in its release from the bondage of ice; all things in nature were singing resurrection, for spring had come to kiss the earth.

Oscar began his gardening, his old bones wrapped in greening coat and wadded muffler, with arctics and ear laps which he seemed to need, yet lovingly baring his hands for work around the roots and shrubs and bursting bulbs.

Sheltered from the wind in bath chairs Carter had set out in sunny places here and there, Terry bade her long farewell to the home she loved while she gazed at the lake, blue-green as a robin's egg, that shimmered through the uncurtained arches of the trees, or watched the stately cloud ships as they dipped their billowing sails.

Her long farewell . . . In October she had loved the mellow year's soft nodding into drowsiness and had resolved with fierce, insistent passion that she would keep the loveliness she had achieved, yet now in the even more beloved spring she was whipping her will to loose her grip on all she had fought to hold.

Wrapped in fur, she paced the paths; silent with grief she pressed her tear-wet cheek to Melody's; desolate she went at night along the shore where the virgin birches yawned their first stirring wakefulness. The silence of the April dusk was more musical than sound, the whispering cold of the April dark was more beautiful than light.

For Toni's sake she drew deep breaths and thought of courage, but the days were a drowning, and the love in her heart was the double-edged blade of a sword.

The telegram that she had sent to Mabel sealed her decision with a promise she both regretted and renewed. She didn't want to go back to the old forced ambition, but there was no choice. She couldn't stay. A half-maniacal hatred of Nicolai, as she thought of him with his companion, was the only fuel the fires of her fierce reaction against him needed to feed their flames. She must get away from everything that was his, and to keep her very mind from breaking she must work. The play, the long close printed pages of *Helena's* lines, would save her, because they would demand the utmost effort she could command for memorizing.

And yet . . . oh, weather-vane heart, there were hours when only her pride kept her from telling Field that in spite of everything Nicolai had done or might do she still loved him. Her faith in him and her childish abandonment to belief in love of him died hard. She felt at times as if the threat of divorce he had held over her those days in October had been a club that had beaten her away from him. Her imagination was stimulated until she thought in pictures and she saw that night in the study, when he had said Toni put an end to living, as a dagger thrust. He had stabbed her then, and still she had taken her wounds to the fountain of his love for healing. After that even, the consciousness of his infidelity had grown upon her. That had come as poison, slowly administered, insidiously working its havoc in the veins of her heart's life. Assume the burden of guilt herself as she often did, she always returned to the irrefutable consciousness that the hand that had slain her love was the hand of the beloved itself. "No one else could have turned me from him," she cried again and again.

Then came days when she was blessedly impervious to the pain of her loss—when it was clear to her that her suffering was part of her evolution from girlhood into womanhood. She was honest with herself in facing the fact that because of Nicolai's money and power she had

willed to love him even before she met him. She had deliberately woven illusions about him until the surrender of her virginity had finished the change in her.

Sometimes her grief fluttered away from her on a butterfly mood of her pathetic youth, but oftener old, old sorrows were her guests, and then their ancient reflections were mirrored in her eyes. Some of her thoughts were long and more terrible in their maturity than her mother's dreams.

She spent one whole morning, then another at her desk, trying to express one thought that would not take shape in words until she had wrestled with it, but when she had succeeded in shaping it, she memorized it: The love of wives for their husbands is one of life's most baffling miracles. It is a love that can see nothing or everything; a love that is blind with loyalty or wise with perception. There is no love so difficult to crucify. It derives its force from four sources and each, alone, is strength sufficient for eternal life. Spiritually it is the very breath of the Creator, physically it springs from the heart of nature, mentally it is habit, and socially it is the armor of chastity. When good women become disillusioned they develop the maternal attitude toward their husbands.

If it was childish it was no less so than certain phases of the mind that had written it; if it was wise, it but partook of dearly bought experience. Cynical it was not, at least not consciously, for the acid of disillusionment was a thousand times diluted with the tears of grief.

It seemed a long time before the report came back from "Alice of Paris" as Harry Field called Miss Montgomery, who wrote that it had been quite simple to get the evidence they wanted. Nicolai had boldly registered Fanny Reeves as his wife and had taken her to and from the Hotel du Rhin. Several Americans in Paris at the time had seen his advertising figure in restaurants and theaters where he was known as the Russian-American millionaire who had married a dancer, and they had of course supposed

Fanny to be the dancer. They had gone to Monte Carlo with a party of Russians and there again Alice had found them registered. In the meantime Mabel Spencer had visited the steamship company's offices and had found that they crossed together on the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse.*

Field denounced Nicolai for his flagrant indiscretion. "The conceit of him! The egotism that he dares to take such chances with you. It's the game of the high gods, Terry. They are playing you out of his life into mine where you belong. Some day you'll look back to this time and say, marveling that you ever suffered, 'It was my good fortune and I didn't know it.' They tell me that you have to be old to know that looking back is so different from actuality."

"And you are old enough to know?" Terry smiled palely.

"No. Not that old, and yet I am old in experience, in some kinds of experience, my little dear."

He was old enough in experience to have qualms that he could not hide from her. "If this were a dueling country I'd have to take a fencing lesson every few hours."

Because his love was the only solace she had, she did not question it. She knew his fear was natural and, since he had controlled it before, she believed he would control it again. "I never went to the door of The Towers this last winter that I didn't imagine Nicolai walking to meet me with a pistol in his hand. I was braced for him every time I met him," he confessed once when they paced the path by the lake in the April darkness.

Terry had known that the servants at The Towers were watching them, and she warned Field to make his calls both brief and professional. She often asked Lena to stay in the room when Dr. Field was there, but because they had much to say, because she needed his ardor and tenderness, she went out to walk at night, pacing the terrace for a while then, disappearing in the darkness to

meet him by the lake, or in the park for long earnest talk.

Because she was outdoors most of the day, Carter did not seem to wonder at her lonely wanderings at night, but he was always there to receive her when she came in. "These are cold nights, Mrs. Karanoff," he said, once, anxiously.

"But beautiful and still and very good for me," she answered.

XI

IT was early in May that Gus Samuels made the long journey to White Falls to see Terry, who found him more than reasonable with her limitations. He told her he planned to open *Helena's Husband* in Detroit early in September and they were booked for Toledo and Cleveland on their way back to New York. He assumed that of course she would be "fit and fine" for the premiere; he hadn't a doubt of it, nor had Terry herself while he was with her.

The days he spent at The Towers were the happiest she had known in months. They lived technique; they read aloud and talked endlessly of *Helena* and her psychology.

Terry was a little disappointed when she learned that, though the piece was built around *Helena*, the star part was really that of the husband, *Sheldon Pratt*. Conway George was cast for the stellar rôle, and it was his name that advertised the production. Samuels explained jovially that even so she was beginning at the top of the ladder and ought to be duly thankful. It left her but one step more to take and that was off the ladder entirely into the firmament itself. Terry, to whom, in the sleepless hours of the night, her newly awakened ambition had suggested far reaching possibilities, shook her head. She had further plans than stardom she told him.

"I find," she confided, "that I am dreaming of writing a play myself. A play by myself for myself."

He had applauded the idea.

Terry glowed in his encouraging presence. With him to appreciate, with Mabel's faith and her self-respect to be regained, she must surely succeed. That was her mood one day. When later her aunt wrote with scoffing of Samuels' amiability and cautioned her not to expect him always to be "so angelically lamblike" Terry's heart sank. But Miss Spencer was wrong for once about Gus Samuels; he always was to Terry "angelically lamblike," because in his dealings with her he remembered as accessory to her, the fittings of luxury with which he had found her surrounded. She was to him part of an enormous success. She had achieved a place of enviable altitude in a world that represented all that, to Gus Samuels, was desirable. To him she would never be the pathetic neophyte for he saw her as one who stooped from the heights.

Many times she relived the last hour of Samuels' visit. He had been there two days, her house guest, and Clara had stayed away from the mills to be with Terry. The hour before his train was to leave he came downstairs, his bag packed, and sat opposite Terry ready for any last details that needed discussion.

Dr. Field had come in but was immediately called to the telephone. When he returned to the drawing room to say that he must leave at once to see the Caulkins' grandchild, who was very ill, he asked that Clara be spared to go with him for he would need intelligent help. They left at once and Terry and Samuels sat facing each other.

"Charming chap, that doctor." Samuels wagged his head backward in the direction Field and Clara had taken. "I should think your husband would leave you in the care of some old graybeard."

"Almost anybody would think that but Nicolai. Nicolai knows himself to be so irresistible he can have no fear of a rival. Women have spoiled him. I think perhaps he has been irresistible."

"Ha! I've seen the type. I've seen their wives too. Field's young."

"That is his tragedy . . . that he is young. And mine . . . that I am young. I think it is a pity that we must be old before we know how to live, and yet perhaps it is fortunate if even when we are old we know how to live."

"Sober thoughts you're having."

"Do I seem older to you, Gus? You haven't seen me since my wedding day. Have I grown up?"

"Tremendously; I noticed it immediately. Your eyes! They're deeper. Youth is something of a misfortune. . . . Very beautiful, very sad." He was looking at Terry with a keen contemplative squint.

She said, meeting his gaze: "Gus, do you still live by your old belief that failure is the only sin?"

"Stronger than ever. I not only live by it but I absolutely condemn the failures as sinners. How about you?"

"I used to take your philosophy very seriously but lately . . . everything I read, everything I see and understand tells me you are wrong . . ."

"Wait a minute now, wait a minute! You've married a selfish man, haven't you? You've reacted; you're telling yourself that you are a failure and you're looking for the reason. That's morbid conscience. You haven't failed. He has. Here are you, loyal little wife—so on and so on. Playing up. Where is he? Who's the failure? You want to remember that conscience is cowardice. Hold to that; conscience is weakness. *Macbeth* said it, you know that."

"But ideals, Gus. Have you no room for ideals?"

"What greater ideal could I have than the one I have given you, the one I live by?"

"Oh, but what about that higher ideal—that the true success is to labor? To fix your eyes on a star and hold them there and if failure comes to know that it hasn't been failure of the soul, of the spirit . . ."

"You talk like an obsolete religion! Let me tell you

again. Don't nurse your conscience. You mustn't. Crucifixion lies that way; insanity lies that way. Your talent is calling you now. Go into it with practical, common-sense honor, but cut the conscience. Conscience means that the thing you chose to do was wrong. Conscience is a confession of sin. Sin is failure. Don't admit failure. Listen to me, girl. Conscience is confession of weakness."

Terry fixed her eyes on him in judgment. He stopped, and met her look. She held him in that straight gaze that affirmed nothing and asked no questions. It was as if she said, "This then is you, yourself, Gus. I am seeing the thing that is your soul. You are satisfied to have me believe you just this thing you have revealed." He hitched his chair a few inches, rose to lay the stub of his cigar on a tray and stood thinking. His eyes came back to her grave face. "You're an actress, Terry. You've got it in you."

She lowered her eyes and breathed deeply. She was thinking of Clara and with the intention of quoting her she began, speaking very slowly. "I want to be an actress, Gus. That is my road to self-support, but I am looking . . . up another avenue, that leads to the stars. I begin to feel . . . at last . . . that something of courage is coming to me to make me stronger and finer to live. 'It takes strength to live, and living can't be snatching at the bones of desire. Living isn't crying, I go forward to success and damned be failure. Living is the courage to admit failure. It's keeping an ear tuned to conscience. . . .'" She leaned forward, her eyes on his, still quoting, " 'It's the voice that leads on and on to the only success, the success that is the will to strip off the rags of selfishness! The only failure is failure to be true,' Gus. You've heard that all your life. I've heard it and passed it by as the sort of thing people say but don't mean. Now I know what you don't know . . . that it's true. To make stepping stones of conscience, upward to a realization of peace with conscience . . . that is what I want now. I must

ease this hunger for the thing I once had and threw away as not worth having. . . ." Her voice ceased abruptly.

She saw that Samuels was stirred, but instead of impressing him with Clara's idealism she had evidently shocked him by her own earnestness, for he said, half whispering, "My God! What have you done?" then deliberately breaking into smiles he applauded.

Terry started and her embarrassment at his comment was lost in bewildered interrogation. "That's good stuff! That's great! Put that in the play you're going to write. You did that with a true *Lady Macbethian* power. I was talking to your aunt about that the other day, your luck —being born on the stage. You have all the advantages of heredity and environment too. You have a thought like this one you just gave me; you want to express it feelingly. It's on conscience and naturally—you can't help it—you fall into the *Lady Macbeth* posture. Voice and all. . . ."

Said Terry, suddenly abashed, "I wasn't thinking of *Lady Macbeth.*"

Harry Field, looking preoccupied and hurried, ran in again after Gus was gone to tell Terry that he had decided the matter of her reception of Nicolai. "I have thought it all out," he told her over the tea cups, "and I have written your aunt a professional statement of your mental and physical condition and advised that you go about June first to any sanitarium she and your mother select."

He helped himself to more sugar and stirred his tea absently. "I have told them that you must be successfully hidden and though I'll take you to New York I won't know your further destination. I shall say goodbye to you in the station."

Terry slowly lowered the macaroon she had been about to eat. "You say you have written that already?"

"Yes, it's here." He looked about vaguely for a place

to set his plate, made a helpless movement on discovering no available space on the tea tray and finally reached over and put it on the down cushioned seat of a chair. "You see I must be ignorant of your destination."

He took the letter from his pocket, spread it open and gave it to Terry with one hand while with the other he retrieved his plate and put more sugar in his tea.

"When in doubt add sugar," Terry said faintly, thankful for a triviality that would cover the sickening beating of her heart. She began to read but for a moment her eyes would not move beyond the words. "I must be ignorant of her destination and therefore unable to tell Mr. Karanoff her whereabouts."

He was really willing to let her go into the unknown and not to have even her address! For a blind moment she sank as in cold water.

"All right?" he asked, helping himself to another cake, and by his tone she knew that he expected her to praise him for his caution, but she did not answer at once. She lowered her head to her hand in an attitude that passed for one of thoughtfulness. Through the confusion of her hurt pride she managed at last to say, "Do you think it necessary to go with me? Lena can do everything I need. . . ."

"Of course I'm going with you! I wouldn't dream of having it otherwise." He flashed a lover's smile over a cigarette he was about to light.

After he was gone she sat musing upon his complacent acceptance of separation. He was perfectly willing to let her go; he could plan to say goodbye and let her continue into the unknown and he would address his letters in care of Mabel, trusting to Mabel to deliver them to her. Perhaps there was nothing in the least unusual about his point of view. Certainly she knew very, very little about the masculine mind, for she had had neither father nor brother to observe, but to save Harry

from the unkind judgment of her mother and Mabel she would write explaining why he must be protected from Nicolai's wrath.

Before going to bed she wrote, apologizing for him.

He is just getting started here in White Falls after a terrible struggle and now that he is physician at the mills he mustn't do anything to anger Nicolai. If he knew where I am and refused to tell, Nicolai would damn him here forever. There is no need of that and besides he has very high ideals and prefers not to tell an untruth when he says he took me only as far as New York where he left me in your care.

And to protect him further she sent a cable to Nicolai a few days before they left White Falls telling him she was homesick for her mother and leaving for New York on Tuesday with Dr. Field and Lena to help her on the journey.

She told Field about it and said, "I am trying to protect you from Nicolai's doubt."

He smiled his appreciation, unaware that she was weighing him. "I don't believe you need worry about that, dear. I sent him a cable myself so that, in case he heard about it, he would understand that my part in it is one, purely, of medical adviser."

Purely . . . medical adviser! Nicolai evidently so regarded him for he replied, simply—"Have private car for trip."

Field did not show that return message to Terry till they were in the car for which Charlie had arranged. He took the cable from his pocket and she read it through blinding tears that preceded a night of deep despair.

That long night! While Lena slept near by Field sat at Terry's bedside struggling with the small stinging problems that had to do with their future. The private car that Charlie, knowing his employer's wishes, had stocked with more wine, flowers, fruit than they would

have been able to use on a trip to the Pacific coast, had revived in the harassed weariness of his mind, the old struggle over money. She accepted Nicolai's gifts with pleased appreciation, yet as a matter of course. It even seemed certain all at once, that she had actually needed a private car. She yielded to its comfort so naturally that he found himself trying to imagine how she would ever have managed to get along in anything more public. And yet he knew that for him and his wife the future held nothing of the kind. This that Nicolai ordered with less concern than the average man gives to the buying of a good cigar would never be possible for Field, even were his best beloved's very life at stake.

At times while the train roared through the darkness Terry talked to him brokenly, in whispers, of the doubts and questions that churned feverishly through her mind. When she expressed her fear that Nicolai would search her out and take her back to punish her for her sins, Field tried to reassure her and he promised the protection of his own devotion, the United States Army and Navy and the power of the law. But she answered that Nicolai would be angry, only she knew how angry he could be . . .

And she talked of duty and honesty. Was duty sometimes distinct from honesty? In those Sunday schools where Field and Clara had been trained did they say that there was a difference?

Field didn't remember about that, but in any event for Terry honesty was the only way. But Terry wondered. Her duty to Nicolai still lay in continuation of the marriage bond, but would that be honest? No. She answered herself. She would be living a lie, if she went on with him now. For her to continue as his wife, giving him a spurious son and accepting his lavish support would be perfidy—nothing less.

Perfidy! Field took passionate exception to the word. She had become supersensitive, he said. She need feel no

remorse as far as Nicolai was concerned. So long as she gave him all that he had married her to acquire, for the lack of which he would have divorced her, she need not distress herself.

She was quiet after that, wondering if Field ever thought that perhaps she did owe Nicolai . . . But no. It was but his dear way of comforting her. She slipped her hand into his and whispered, smiling, "At least my conscience is awake now." No need—no further need—of contact with the granite of Clara's judgments.

XII

"THIS is your home from now on as long as you choose to accept it," Mabel told Terry as they walked about the apartment arm in arm that one day before going on to the sanitarium. "This bedroom is yours and the little room at the back is to be the nursery."

Terry looked about the familiar room with its ivory furniture and prettying cretonne that once she had thought so beautiful, and went to sit on the window seat. Mabel followed and stood touching her dark hair with caressing fingers. Everything Mabel did and said was a kindness, an expression of tenderness. Her voice, low pitched, with its deliberate enunciation was as soothing as her touch, and minor with a sympathy she did not try to put into words.

The description of the sanitarium and a eulogy of Dr. Baer served as subjects for their careful talk at first. All theatrical women went to Dr. Baer if they could afford him, Mabel told her, for he was preëminent in obstetrics and had a method whereby he dismissed his patients not to the rich woman's luxurious convalescence, but fitted them for a return to their work, and from the first took particular care of their beauty.

Their beauty! A beauty but skin deep like hers that had defeated her.

The rooms at the sanitarium, as Mabel described them, were as large as some at The Towers, for Dr. Baer was reserving his finest suite for her and her mother, and Terry understood that not the magic of Nicolai's name this time but Mabel Spencer's influence had secured that comfort for her.

She closed her eyes and rested her head against Mabel's arm. The homesickness that lay like a stone on her heart seemed gradually to be melting to tears under the warmth of that quiet understanding. They could not speak of Nicolai, and after Field's professional farewell in the station they had not mentioned his name. She had returned to her aunt as alone as she had gone out from her almost two years before.

"I have never seen you when you seemed so like your father as now, Terry," Mabel said, breaking the silence. "It makes me love you more, if that were possible. At last you have grown up to me."

Terry kissed the arm against which her face was pressed. "I have changed?"

"Yes. You've let life hurt you. You've been terribly vulnerable. And he was too. Not without courage, but sensitive in the extreme. I used to want to bear things for him."

"Tell me more."

"You know his story. He would have been a great stage manager. He was a most lovable man. Your eyes today are like his, deep with hurt and hunger. I don't know why it was so with him."

"Was he good, Mabel?"

"Yes. In every way."

"And wise?"

"Yes. Not shrewd, but understanding."

"He knew things by instinct and did what was right?"

"Right is a various word. Sometimes he was over-

generous, too self-effacing. If he made mistakes they were on that side."

After another silence Mabel added, with an inflection that was music, "I think you must know that you are like that too, Terry. You love to give, don't you? You have given a bit too generously, haven't you?"

"I . . . don't know." She did know and passionately she regretted while before her eyes was the face of the father she but dimly remembered. If Mabel had seen in her father's eyes what she saw in hers, then he too must have regretted. Yet Mabel could never say enough in praise of him. Though he was young when he died he had won the love and faith of the greatest in his world, friends that her mother had not been able to hold after his death.

"If he had lived," she said aloud, "my eyes wouldn't be deep with hurt and hunger. He would have shown me the way as I shall show Toni . . ."

"I tried to show you the way, Terry," Mabel reminded her gently. "When love such as yours for Nicolai takes possession of a generous heart nothing can save it from hurt and hunger. You think now that you would have taken your father's advice, yet you would not take mine, and my judgment is good. Your father had faith in my good sense."

"Mabel . . ."

"Dear . . . You know what I want for you. Freedom from the prostitution of a loveless marriage. I can guide you out of the maze of it—if you will let me. Nicolai must be told that you know about . . ."

"Yes." Her voice pleaded with Mabel not to finish the sentence. She stirred and the caressing fingers on her hair were still. "You want to tell Nicolai yourself? Is that it?" she whispered after a pause.

"No. Not that. I have written a letter to him that tells him. I only want you to agree to it, to copy and sign and let me give it to him when he comes. I offer it, Terry,

as my best judgment. Will you read it with sympathy for the purpose I have for you?"

"Yes . . ."

They went together into the living room and Terry watched with eyes red rimmed and hot with unshed tears while Mabel took the letter from her blotting book. She sank into the writing chair and Mabel stooped beside her to read in her moving voice the crisp sentences that would declare war on Nicolai, and as she listened with lowered lids, her quivering mouth pressed on her clasped hands, she was seeing Nicolai, hearing Nicolai, wondering, wondering what his reply would be. There was nothing in it she could not sign and to save Mabel she felt that she must agree to it.

"It doesn't sound like me exactly, some of the words," she whispered.

"You mean it is more mature than you would be?" Mabel smiled at her regretfully. "You don't know how old you have grown, Terry. You were always thoughtful, with a talent for English, but your letters lately are full of words and ideas I should never dream were your own, if I didn't know. You are older than your mother will ever be and that, too, is like your father. He was never childish, nor are you."

Mabel lifted her drooping face and kissed her lips lightly, then she put a pen in her cold fingers and spread the letter she was to copy before her.

My dear Nicolai,

I don't know how to say the things I must tell you in this letter because there are no words to describe the change that has come about in me these last weeks. I am no longer the girl you left in White Falls on April first. Some day we shall meet and talk over our relationship, but it must be after I am perfectly well again and better accustomed to the thoughts that are filling my mind with trouble now. I want to hide from you. I beg of you not to hunt for me.

I want to spare these who are caring for me the great

unpleasantness of telling you that I know about Fanny Reeves. I had felt that your desertion of me for a pleasure trip when my need and my loneliness were very great, was all I could bear. When I learned through a friend in Paris that you had traveled with Miss Reeves, registered her under my name and gone to Monte Carlo in a party, I think not only all of life but all myself changed. I realize that according to your code you did only the usual thing. I married that code when I married you, but I am an American, and the publicity of your offence and its flagrant disregard for consequences are to me unforgivable. Further than that, I am certain that if I were very dear to you, you would not have risked losing me by any one of the three methods you have chosen to alienate me from you. Last October on the first anniversary of our meeting you threatened me with divorce. Later when your wish came true you left me. Because you happened to want her you took Miss Reeves with you. I think all three offences were needed to change my love for you to its exact opposite, a revulsion of feeling that makes me dread ever again to see your face.

In addition to all these things I have grown up since I married you. I am of age now and soon I shall be earning my own living. I have a chance and I shall take it and work hard. You will not be able to get more information than I have given you in this letter. I am safe and well cared for. I will soon be strong again and then I shall send for you.

Terry.

Nicolai landed on June tenth, following a series of furious cables demanding that Terry break her silence. He went at once to Mabel's apartment and found her awaiting him. Of their brief interview she made a very unimpassioned story when she retailed it to Terry. She had received him in cool silence, had handed him Terry's letter, and had watched him read it. When he looked up, pale with anger, he had questioned her but with small result, and he had said that he would go at once to his lawyer.

"Your lawyer," Mabel told him, or so she informed

Terry, "will not read that letter twice. He will ask you if those statements are true and unless you choose to tell falsehoods he will answer that you haven't any kind of a case. You can fight all you please for your wife and child, but the law will show you that you have no claim on her nor on her child unless she chooses to give you one."

From Harry Terry heard that Nicolai had taken the fastest train for Chicago, telegraphed Field the hour of his arrival in White Falls, and asked him to meet him at the station. They had discussed the medical department at the mills during the short drive to The Towers but when they were alone in Nicolai's study he had begun at once about Terry.

Terry easily imagined the two men facing each other before the cold fireplace. Nicolai had demanded to know all Field could tell him about his wife.

"I do not know where she is. She is in hiding," Field had been able to say quite truthfully, and he had told her little more than that they had discussed her case.

That interview, however, was the beginning of an ague of fear in Field. Nicolai's cold eyes had bored straight into his most vulnerable spot—his uneasy conscience.

"Why did you let her go?" he asked after Field said he didn't know where she was.

"She wanted to see her mother. She was very lonely and there was no reason why she could not go."

"Did you know they were going to hide her?"

"I knew she was very unhappy about you and dreaded your homecoming."

Nicolai's eyes narrowed to glittering slits. Field was certain that he had not winked since he first began to question him.

"Was she sick?"

"Yes. Sick with unhappiness and fear. Otherwise she was normal."

"Normal means well, doesn't it?"

"Not in her case."

"I see. When she is perfectly well she probably will feel different. She is piqued, perhaps, and supersensitive, but she will be all right when she is well? You think that, don't you?"

Field did not reply at once. He was finding it difficult not to show his agitation. Nicolai was a terrible adversary to face. To humor him was doubtless the best he could do for Terry.

"We never know what the mental condition will be," he said finally. "You can think as you choose. Your guess is as good as mine."

"What is this chance for work she talks about? That's her aunt's meddling."

"Not altogether. Mr. Samuels wants her for a new play."

Nicolai laughed. "That sounds fine for Terry. They don't know her as well as I do evidently. She'll no more stay on the stage and support herself than she'll take in washing. She loves luxury too well. And she loves me. I'll have her back here by September. Does she think for one minute that I'll give up my own son . . . now? At my age? I'll buy every stage manager in New York City and block her flimsy game. She ought to know better than to start a fight against me. The little fool."

Field sprang to his feet.

Nicolai waived him back. "Calm yourself, Field. Don't start any heroics. I know all about your high ideals without your telling me. They're very nice and all that, but the American man is being bound and gagged and robbed blind by his women. Go to Asia where the civilization is four thousand years old, where wisdom began and where you Americans will yet crawl humbly to lie at the feet of the prophets, and you'll learn things about women that you don't dream now. They're serpents. They embody all the guile, all the craft, all the witchery

of the human race. Give them their heads the way you asinine Anglo-Saxons do and they'll make groveling slaves of you." Nicolai spat into the fireplace. "Don't you try to tell me about women, and don't you trust one of them further than you can see. That's a wise man's advice to a young chap like you. Tell me more about the work at the mills. How much time have you saved now, actually?"

And that was Nicolai's home-coming. He had made it clear to Field that he considered Terry's temporary abandonment of him but further proof of the damnable pouting of the spoiled American girl. He had behaved as if to say—"I have lived alone before and will soon be used to living alone again," and intimated that when there was a child to fight for he would fight, but while Terry was nursing a grudge, he would bide his time and let her cool her heels outside the radius of his glittering possessions.

The next morning Field had occasion to consult Nicolai in his office about the further work in the hospital department and, though Nicolai received him at once, he did not look up from a letter he was writing until he had signed his name. Then he pushed the sheets across his blotter to Field and said, "Is there anything in that to upset a sick girl?"

Field read it rapidly once, but went back over it a second time more slowly.

My dear Terry,

Your letter was somewhat of a shock to me as I am sure you must have known it would be. It seems a little unreasonable of you to deny me the privilege of a quiet talk. You certainly have nothing to fear from me. I think I could make you see that even an American woman might allow her husband a pleasure trip without becoming melodramatic about it. I did want you to go along, you remember, and offered to take Field with us. You were my first choice, my dear, as always. However, you are ill now, and if you prefer to be alone and

quiet with your mother I can wait awhile. Of course, I do not intend to give you up and I am certain that happiness, for you, in the end will be found only in the arms of your child's father. That is the natural and best place for a woman. Whether we are American or Asiatic in our ideals we all believe that blood is the strongest tie that binds. I am sorry that I have made you unhappy by my very normal behavior but we will discuss that another time. Just now I want you to have everything that money can buy for your comfort and I enclose a check that ought to do considerable along that line.

Yours always,
Nicolai.

"All right?" Nicolai repeated, watching him. Evidently he was pleased with his own effort.

"Yes," said Field, his jaw tight to restrain an hysterical laugh. "It's the truth. I hope she'll realize it."

Later in the week Field received a request for a bill covering his care of Mrs. Karanoff for the past months. He wrote in reply that there was no charge against Mr. Karanoff, as the initial fee had more than covered his further services. In answer to this he received a check from Nicolai accompanied by a few words dictated in letter form. "Never refuse money. You might find a use for it some day."

Field sent him a receipt for the check without effort at humor and told himself that but for his mother he would return the equivalent of all he had received from both Terry and Nicolai, tell Karanoff the truth, and engage him in a bloody fist fight that would clear the air and free his conscience. But he did no such thing; he went through the days that were filled with the work he most desired. The new hospital project was under way, launched by Field himself and a committee of his friends. He felt that it would be a dream fulfilled within five years and in the meantime they would equip an old residence

as a temporary home for the hospital until the new building should be fully subscribed and completed.

It was his intense interest in the hospital, he decided, that saved him from missing Terry unduly. He had expected to suffer and he knew he would have suffered had not June been full to the brim with hospital committee work, social benefits, and plans. Lyda Wayne was giving a lawn fete and she had told Field that whatever the proceeds lacked of being sufficient to endow a ward to bear her name she would herself make up. And added, "Make up, you understand, from Dad."

Lyda, in reaction from a long season of idleness and neglect on the part of Field, went into the work that interested him with a zest that did not stop with her own lawn fete, and Field reflected that she was too valuable an asset to the hospital to be disregarded. If his attention would buy her enthusiasm he must give her that attention. She was proving herself his friend and he had to admit he enjoyed her. He realized that while Terry was at The Towers he had moved among his friends immune to their charm because his whole consciousness had always been dominated by memories of the things Terry had just said, the way she had looked, the crumbs of favor she had given him. He had never been allowed even to look at her enough to satisfy his hunger and like a starving man his time outside the banquet hall had been filled with desire to return. Now the banqueting place was empty and darkened. Taking part again in the gaieties of his neglected friends, he had found that he had missed them. But he experienced a pang of jealousy when Terry wrote of a visit she had had from Conway George. He had come down with Gus Samuels late in June and the three had gone over the lines of the play very happily. They had been in harmony in their interpretation of the characters of the leads. She liked Mr. George immensely; he was not a silly peacock like so many good looking actors. Terry assured Field that she had no intention

of being ill long. She would be playing her part in Detroit in the premiere performance, she was sure.

XIII

FIELD sat with that letter in his hand one evening when a fragrant June rain dripped from the trees, and tried to answer it. He had begun with the passionate urgency he had taught her to expect from him, but had thought better of it. Tearing the paper into a small snow storm he began again and produced instead a letter that would give her a hint of the change at work in him even while it assured her of his undying love. When it was finished he felt that it almost expressed his strangely commingled fear and desire.

Darling Terry,

Here I am in White Falls awaiting the moment when your telegram will arrive to call me to you. And while I think of you, wishing you would send for me, you are interpreting a play, studying your part, admiring Mr. George and planning that premiere in Detroit.

To tell you the truth I am tremendously busy and interested myself in living these days, and the promise of success in the hospital is enough to make me happy with hope even though I cannot see now, or ever, freedom from financial embarrassment. A house, food, an education for my son and comforts for my mother are enough for me if I have work and the right kind of place in which to work, but when I think of you, Heart of a Rose, I sicken at my own selfishness. What right—what faintest excuse have I to persuade you away from that dream palace on the hill? I waked the other morning under the scourge of this torment that gets me every now and then and, knowing I could not sleep again, I dressed and went over to Karanoff Park. It was early but that mighty lover the sun, was kissing the mists on the lake "until they died for love of him," and the trees stood like carven jade in

the rosy light. It was in your phrases that I thought of the place because I was seeing it with your dear poet's eyes. I walked through the woods where I had met you on Melody that morning—little slim princess that you were in your ultra-civilized habit, and I thought—"Have I a right to take Melody's reins from her hand and substitute a broom?"

I went down to the lake path and followed it slowly to the foot of the waterfall where Siesta and Aspiration wait for you. I saw the birches—your virgins. And I said to myself, "In exchange for these, her beautiful friends, I shall give her a patch of lawn on a city street and curb stones all in a row." Terry! I believe we are mad—both of us. How can I expect you to love a man who must seem to you to love himself more than he loves you? And as I write that I realize that you have never told me with your face lifted to mine that you do love me—

You have seen—or rather you have divined—the power of my conscience to torment me. As I near the day when you will cut your ties to Nicolai I cannot but search out this question with your best good my first, my deepest concern. A few months ago you were blind as fate itself to every desire save to please Nicolai and to hold him. How, then, can I help realizing that the day may come when you will emerge from this time of shock and illness and despair to the certainty that that desire was the right one for you? You and I have been married, each to our first love, hardly long enough to realize what the veterans say is true—that there comes a time when we know that love is the least of the many important considerations in marriage. The French don't discuss this as a question but call it fact. In the long run of matrimony most things are of more importance than love, or so they say.

It is raining and I write my ruminations. Love is everything in the world to me and you are that love. When your message comes and you are wanting me I shall not delay an instant—you know that.

God bless you, darling, and keep you safe for me.

H— F—

After he had mailed the letter Field was troubled as to its possible effect on Terry, yet he was right to remind

her of all she would be giving up, and he might have gone on to list the extreme unpleasantness she would have to endure should she ever return to White Falls as his wife.

To invite Nicolai's enmity seemed to him now, since he was again seeing Nicolai, sustaining his gimlet gaze, to be the very act of professional suicide. Nicolai was letting it be known that he was anxious for Terry's return. Since his first outburst to Field he had spoken of her only with concern and restrained tenderness. Clara had remarked upon it to Field one day, and had said, "He thinks he married her for a purpose, but he loves her. He's finding out how much right now while she is hiding from him and her life is in danger. If she dies . . . Really, Harry, wouldn't it be terrible, if Terry had to die to make Nicolai know how much he cares?"

Field had curled a lip at her teasingly and called her sentimental, a romantic, but his blood chilled with apprehension. If Nicolai discovered how much he loved her and then he, Field, came out into the open as her lover, only the devil himself could anticipate what Nicolai might do. Nicolai had so big a part in the new hospital, because of the work the mills would bring in, that he could easily, and doubtless would, drive Field out as he would drive out vermin. There was no doubt but that he and Terry must face probable banishment from White Falls. There would of course be the money Terry's lawyers would get for her, perhaps a considerable sum,—perhaps nothing. For turning the law his way Nicolai had a genius that he would not fail to exert against his rival. No. It was right that Field should remind Terry of these difficulties before she told Nicolai of her intention to divorce him.

Until after Terry went away the whole problem, as it concerned them all, had seemed as clear to him as that it is good for the earth that the sun should shine. Terry belonged to him by all the laws of life, or so he had believed when he had pleaded so passionately with her.

He couldn't have believed then that he would ever see another side. Yet now the other side seemed as irrefutable as a geometrical axiom.

There had been a night soon after Terry went away when his imagination had been stimulated by a short story he had read, and for the first time since he had plunged headlong into love for her he saw the practical side of the thing he desired. One of the least of these new difficulties was the thought of rearing two children in the same small house, with the knowledge that they were both his children, yet with the eternal lie that they were related only by marriage poisoning their days. How could they teach the children to be truthful when their eyes—his and Terry's—must meet above them in a continuous, a living falsehood? They would have need, if Toni were a girl, of keeping the two from romantic attachment. Norrie would believe his step sister to be the child of Karanoff, of course. A hideous possibility there, and his hands and Terry's tied by secrecy. As the children grew older they would have to manage to keep them apart—years of silent intrigue until one or the other was married. Then there would be Nicolai's relentless hold on the child he believed his. He would bide his time and when the child was old enough he would make his offer and his appeal. What youth, reared in the American scene, where the aristocracy is one of wealth rather than brains or blood, could resist a Nicolai offering a veritable kingdom?

Terry must face it, and since all her thought was on the heights and in the depths that had small concern with the practical, he must think for her.

Flower-Terry. Slim rose tree of fragrance and dewy sweetness. Her smile, the lift of her darling head, the downward sweep of lashes so beautiful that they were only rivaled by the upward sweep of the same lashes. Quick tears in eyes as blue as twilight and as tender as dawn. Oh, God.

Then he saw that flower bending, bending to the break-

ing point under the burden of a life shared with him. And there he was listing it all again—exile from all he had achieved in White Falls, pursued by the fatal furies of Nicolai and on and on . . .

No man, no man who had ever lived wanted more to do the right thing than he. There was nothing wrong with his ideals nor with his heart, but life seemed a trap that had him by the leg. For all his searching he couldn't decide which was the bravest, biggest thing to do—to take Terry as a conquering Lochinvar or to save her from himself.

If a small voice within him was saying, "You ought not to be able to recognize the fact that there is such a question. You ought to go to her and stay by her and love her without doubtings because she is yours and her child is yours"—he would not hear it.

But Terry heard it.

When she read his letter with its suggestion of a change in him, she heard the doubt as certainly as if it were the beat of a drum, and she understood. For Field had been Lochinvar. He had already taken her, and so far as he was concerned, she had supposed the question was settled. Now that they had ridden away into the west on the swift steed of his romantic passion he was looking back in fear at the bridegroom he had cheated. . . .

XIV

MANY days passed before Terry could answer him, for his letter was the germ of a new illness that fastened itself upon her. He was deserting her, throwing her back on Nicolai, telling her with the kiss of betrayal that he could not go on with her. She couldn't answer. She could only pray not to care, not to let him hurt her.

She gave herself over completely to the sanitarium regimen and tried to lose herself in anything that promised good for Toni. For her there was an especially planned program of rites sacred to the preservation of her health and beauty. Baths, exercise, massage, the care of her hair and skin were made matters of painstaking scientific exactitude. Gently, without pressure or hurry, she was led through a daily program that saved her from restlessness and pain.

But perfect as was this care it could not save her from the torment of her thoughts. At first the sanitarium had seemed refuge, but now she found that she had escaped only from Nicolai. There was no harbor from Harry Field nor from her mother and Mabel, for she had begun to realize that her mother was tensely set in a determination to reconcile her to Nicolai, while Mabel was pulling as strongly for her freedom. The two had agreed on one thing—that they would spare Terry their persuasions until she was well, but Terry needed no clairvoyance to understand their thoughts. There were times when she would have found it easier to burst forth into discussion with them than to continue the courteous reserve; but she dared not for fear of all that in her agitation she might reveal.

Almost immediately she saw that Mabel was silently observant of Field's letters, which he sent in her care. She either forwarded them from her apartment or, since she made frequent trips back and forth, brought them herself and delivered them into Terry's hand with a quizzical smile that disturbed Terry, who found herself hoping each time that Field would include amusing news of White Falls which she might read aloud to the watchful sisters.

Three ways she was pulled in smiling, silent warfare waged in the peaceful quiet of the sanitarium. There were long periods of stillness when the three were in their sitting room together, where open windows gave

them far view across the Hudson; where the sun, filtered by fluttering awnings, bathed them in light and boats called faintly from the rippling river.

Terry, failing to keep her attention on her book, would observe that Bessie's eyes had an intent look and that her lips moved, probably because she was trying through the hypnotism of her own desire to make Terry feel that for her mother's sake, if not her own, she should go back to Nicolai. And Mabel over her writing or her book, would pause with closed eyes, to concentrate as tensely on another dream, while across Terry's vision three men walked constantly in endless succession like figures on the wall paper; Field, Nicolai, and Gus. Field, Nicolai, and Gus. Only sometimes their names were changed and they were Love, Fear, and Work. Poverty, Luxury, Misery. Joy, Slavery, Freedom. Save as it offered her a way of redemption, the stage could make no lasting appeal to her. The nearer she came to the time for her return to it, the more she feared still further failure. She was not like Mabel; she hadn't the passion, the stamina, for it that made sacrifice a joy to Mabel. Mabel bowed to its greedy grasp as Terry had yielded to Nicolai's demands on her, with hurt that nevertheless brought its strange, its incalculable compensations. . . .

And now Field was expressing doubts to which he had become so accustomed that he had failed to realize with what shock they would come to her, who had felt but six weeks before need to escape his ardent certainty.

Chilled in every nerve she yet wrote calmly as if she were glad he had reached a point of discretion. She reminded him that the stage filled her immediate future and that any number of possibilities might change the condition of their affairs. People sometimes died, she wrote, and could not resist the slightly morbid suggestion that she herself might soon be far removed from his life. With her thought in that channel, there came to her the realization that Toni might not live. Certainly her mind

had dealt with every painful possibility that might beset her save this, that the tiny creature toward whom every bruised tendril of her heart was reaching, might not live. Not live? That little heart beating so close to her own, to be stilled?

That would be punishment such as only a god could inflict on her, and one she had never, until that moment, contemplated. Without the baby a living issue between two men and her own tormented heart, the problem, centered in her, would diminish to practically nothing at all. Yet to pay that price for freedom from it was unthinkable.

She could not go on with her letter and, turning to her mother, who was knitting a jacket no larger than a dinner plate, she pushed the sheets from her quickly and rose from the writing table.

"Mother! Do little babies sometimes die?" The words came so suddenly that they startled Bessie. Her hands dropped to the pink wool in her lap.

"Well, sometimes, dear. Yes, they do."

"Why have I never thought of it before? I have seen Toni for such a long time living, smiling, loving. Once long ago, before we were married, Nicolai talked to me about his desire for a son, and I remember how I loathed being made to consider it so soon—like that—discussing him as a sculptor might discuss a marble cupid he meant to create. Nicolai wanted to know if I was willing, if I too wanted a son, and I thought I had never heard such cold-blooded questions. Of course I wanted him, some time. Doesn't everybody? Can there be people who don't want a little living tender human being of their own? Surely nothing can be so much your own as your child, nothing could be more beautifully important. Yet I hadn't thought about it. You know how I mean that—thought how he'd look, how he'd love me, how he'd grow and change from one beautiful form to another—infant, baby, toddling child, a dear little boy,

a big boy—awkward perhaps, and *needing* me! You know, Mother. And then while Nicolai was talking and when I saw how much he really wanted a son to succeed him, right that minute Toni came alive. I saw his busy darling legs first. Isn't that funny? It was as if I were looking down at the grass, and suddenly a pair of little legs came running into my range of vision. Soft little white calves with socks half way up, above flat soled sandals. I saw his knees inviting kisses and then I looked up into his eyes. It was real to me, that vision, and ever since then he has been coming nearer and nearer. . . . I never dreamed that once he reached my arms he might slip away again and cease. Die. Die. Mother, I never thought of death that way before at all!"

"Then don't think of it now," said Bessie firmly. "What started you off?"

Terry did not answer. She had turned toward the balcony, and after a moment of looking out into the June landscape which she did not see, she said, over her shoulder, "I believe that in all my doubt and trouble I am only sure of one desire, one constant desire now, and that is to keep him, to love him, to be so true and brave and good that he will believe in me with all his heart and soul. Nobody believes in me now, not even you, as he will believe in me! I can be glad all this hurt has come to me if it makes me understand—realize—how important it is to be brave and true and good. Girls . . . the kind of girl I was, are so vague, Mother. They don't get down to facts till they've been hurt. I can't express it rightly. I mean they live in a lovely sort of dream world and they don't understand anything. I'm just beginning to understand about values and life and the magnitude of love."

"Everybody knows girls live in dreams," Bessie said practically, "except the girls themselves. But, my dear child, may I mention a forbidden subject? You talk this way of your love for Toni. Do you realize what that means?"

Terry had no idea what was coming. She said, "What?"

Bessie lowered her voice to a musical impressiveness. "It means that you love—his father. It means that you are finding your way back—to Nicolai."

Terry stared at her mother for a shocked moment before she flared into temper. "It means nothing of the sort. Nothing, nothing. It concerns nobody but Toni and me." She stopped abruptly, her blazing eyes on her mother's face while further revelation poured in upon her. Harry Field could write her a letter that admitted the possibility of relinquishing his right to Toni. He could weigh their possible poverty against such a loss. He could discuss the advisability of her return to Nicolai, which meant the releasing of his son to Nicolai.

The anger in her face subsided to a smoldering stillness before she turned again to the writing table and took up her pen. For a while she wrote and tore up paper, then rising abruptly she took her blotting book into the next room and closed the door.

Alone there, freed by solitude, that illness of which Field's letter had been the germ, flamed into a fever. Words rushed into her mind as blood to a wound or tears to the eyes of grief; and blood and tears are not more salt with bitterness than the primitive pride that took possession of her then.

Putting herself in his place, as acute realization of her love for Toni had come to her, she had known that if he loved either of them as she loved Toni he would not have written so, for unselfish though he might mean to be, he would still be unable to suggest releasing them.

If he could suggest release, then automatically he was released! There was nothing in her that could endure to detain him, to reason or to weep for his lost love. She would make his passing easy, easy . . . As easily as he had come into intimacy with her he should pass out, for she would open the door for him and strew his way with flowers.

Nobody, then, was to share the further price of Toni with her. She would be alone . . .

XV

TWO weeks before Toni was expected, Rosalind greeted the summer dawn with a plaintive wail.

Terry had named her Rosalind before she was old enough to be old at all and she had perceived dimly, happily, that Bessie was pleased with the choice, while Mabel, who could no more subdue her excitement within the confines of her careful poise than she could crowd a gala balloon into a tea cup, was the first to address the new arrival by her name.

Rosalind—weight seven pounds and a bit more—as much more as the avoirdupois of one butterfly hand, with a head the size of a prize poppy and shoulders no wider than her head, lay curled in blankets while her adoring relatives perceived that she already showed promise of the spirit and beauty of that incomparable young woman whom the centuries have known as *Rosalind*.

Just why that name had presented itself Terry did not know, save that when someone who seemed to be shouting said, "A beautiful little daughter for you, Mrs. Karanoff," the figure of the immortal *Rosalind* in boyish doublet and shapely leggins, her feather aslant, had walked across the illumined darkness.

There was a humming numbness in all her body; in her ears the echoing words, "A daughter, a daughter, a daughter," like chiming bells. She wanted to speak but the numbness held her and her lips would not move, her eyelids would not lift. But her thought moved, slowly making a flight of stairs for itself as if it were pulling up, up, out of the darkness and lifting Terry with it.

Much later, when she was quite herself again, she knew just what that strange flight of thought had meant. It had

begun with a happy incredulity that she should have a daughter! Perhaps she had wanted the solace of a daughter all the time and hadn't known it because Nicolai had so positively decreed a son. Nicolai would not be so keen to claim a daughter as a son! Even Nicolai who was selfish would know that a little girl would have to be with her mother. A daughter simplified her problem.

And that was two steps up the flight to the point where she remembered about the sort of life that lay ahead of the atom who now was, and forever would be, all the world to her. She would have to wear the name of a man whose blood was not in her and she would call him father, but in the natural course of events she would one day change that name to one of her own choosing. And that thought was a winged jump of several steps up the flight toward growing relief.

She would need—that dear little lamb—courage for her journey. Courage such as her mother was only now learning; she would need spirit and a sense of humor and wit and wisdom—and independence. Independence of men, first of all, so that whether they loved her beautifully and truly, or greedily and briefly, she would go on her way unharmed by them. Right today, right this minute, her mother would begin to will that she should be like . . . Why, like *Rosalind*, of course, sweetly debonair and gaily independent. There she was again, that figure of *Rosalind*, smiling at Terry through the darkness and humming numbness, her feather aslant, her eyes dancing with fun. And just as distinctly as the chiming bells, Terry heard her clear voice lilting: "Men are April when they woo, December when they wed: maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives. . . ." And, . . . "that woman who cannot make her fault her husband's occasion, let her never nurse her child herself, for she will breed a fool!"

Terry had laughed outright at the familiar words and said aloud, "Good. I shall name her Rosalind for you."

For answer came a voice that was not *Rosalind's. Rosalind* had vanished and a man was saying, "She's coming out of the anæsthetic." Then louder and closer by, "You're smiling, Mrs. Karanoff, what's the joke?"

"A beautiful joke," murmured Terry, and wondered if she was still in the middle of the high white room of shining tile like Carter's pantry at The Towers. She concentrated her effort on the lifting of her eyelids and felt them rise. It was light and as her vision cleared she could see the ceiling looking exactly as it had long before they gave her the chloroform, a ceiling that somebody must have washed with a sponge, for it had grayish circular sweeps to show how much grime had come off and how much had stayed on.

Her eyelids drooped again, for Harry Field's face was there on the ceiling. He had known all that she had learned in these long hours. While she had thought her dancing would make everything easy and rather jolly so that to be brave would be like smiling at the dentist, he had known the truth.

Everything was always different from a girl's conception of it. Only the Rosalinds of this world knew before hand that life was a grim old dance for survival, and that the merry heart who takes all loves, all promises, all hopes, with a grain of salt, was the wise heart. Harry Field had let her go away from him, destination unknown, intending to come to her *when she telegraphed.*

Well, she had not telegraphed. He could not have reached her until some hours yet anyway, when everything was over. He knew that. He had known all the time everything that she had just now found out and would never forget . . .

And now, though she had been taken back to her own suite where color and baffled sunlight, flowers, and the newest of Rosalinds awaited her; though she had smiled, and taken broth through a tube, slept and waked, her thoughts went back to Harry Field, to Nicolai, and to Gus.

Those three walking across her vision in endless succession.

There was Nicolai, for instance, to think about. He was in White Falls. Probably right now he was yawning, stretching, making great ado about getting up for the day. All night he had been lying as relaxed as a little boy in his carved bed. She could see that dear room and her own bed with its embroidered taffeta cover undisturbed. Nicolai would tumble his sheet and turn his face toward her pillow and then remember that she was gone. He would remember, maybe, that in two weeks more the son would arrive, Nicolai Junior, heir apparent, and he would smile with a little twist of his lips to think how easily he was going to bring Terry back to The Towers.

And Harry. What was Harry doing at this hour? Perhaps, like Dr. Baer, he was creeping into bed for a brief nap after a long night's struggle with nature. She had heard him scoff at nature. Nature was nature and you couldn't get around it often, but nature was the cruelest of the cruel, the most ruthless. It was a doctor's job, he said, to study the lady and find out what her big idea was and, if it included cruelty, to circumvent her. "Use her," he said, "but keep a check-rein on her."

Harry was waiting for that telegram. "Any time now," he had been writing for two weeks, "any time you will send for me." If he knew that it might be any time why didn't he come along without a telegram to call him? No. That was unreasonable. She shouldn't have such a thought of him, but what was it he supposed he was going to do when that "any time" arrived? He had received her letter that had been written to let him out, easily, from his self-imposed bonds to limitless freedom. She had found it a simple thing to write on that terrible afternoon when the illness of reaction against him had broken out like flame in her. She had merely agreed with him. So easy that. "How wise you are to look at the practical, to realize that Nicolai's enmity could easily ruin you

professionally in White Falls. I think I can understand that other things matter more than love in marriage, provided, of course, that the two are of the same world." Just such mild lying sentences as that had opened the door while she smiled a farewell that he didn't know was farewell.

There were men, Nicolai said, who lost their jobs and then made a great stir to know why injustice had been done them suddenly. "If they had the brains to realize it," Nicolai said, "they would know that they themselves greased the pole for their own slide down and out." It would be like that with Harry. He would wonder why he had been given his freedom when all the time he had been asking for it. Almost everything he wrote now asked for it in some subtle way. Recently he had told her a story of Nicolai that very evidently had given him the horrors.

He had written,

You remember that a while before Nicolai went away he decided to have part of the old shipping room partitioned off and made into an executives' dining room with a kitchen, so that we could all lunch there every day. The day he left he said to Bonner, "When you go to New York about a certain deal stop in Tiffany's and get a set of dishes for the new dining room." Bonner said he would and accordingly he did go into Tiffany's. But, being a wise purchasing agent, he didn't order the goods because he thought the price too high; so on his return west he stopped at Marshall Field's and priced their stuff. The very same dishes, he found, were to be had for so much less that he ordered them there at once. Well, the other day the new dining room was opened with a dinner that the men meant to be a welcome home to Nicolai. They made a beautiful affair of it for the room is truly wonderful, done by some decorators who came up from Chicago. Nicolai was his nicest, very agreeable and appreciative, until just after the soup he turned to Bonner and said, "These are beautiful dishes, Bonner. Beautiful. You got them at Tiffany's, of course!" Bonner, good old scout, taking pride in his job,

said, "No, Mr. Karanoff, I talked with your friend Mr. Nungesser there, but because their price was so high, I decided just to have a look at Field's and I found I could get the same thing at so material a saving that I ordered them there."

Nicolai was looking at him through unwinking eyes (how that man can stare without winking!) and when Bonner began to get uncomfortable and the rest of us to wipe the sweat of sympathy off our faces, N. said, "I distinctly remember that I told you to get them at Tiffany's."

"You did, you did," Bonner hastened to assure him. "But is it not my business to buy where we get the best prices?"

Nicolai didn't answer. He was rising and when he reached his full height he gave the tablecloth a quick jerk and pulled the whole business off on to the floor. "Hereafter when you need dishes like this set, get them at Tiffany's. Do you understand that?" he said, and he walked out.

Clara wouldn't believe it the first time she heard the tale the next day.

Do you believe it? She says you won't. But I tell you that I lay in bed and never closed my eyes all night. When he gives me mine it won't be anything so simple as broken china.

XVI

HARRY FIELD'S ever fermenting conscience made it impossible for him to wait longer for a telegram. He was feeling uncomfortably guilty. It was more than a week since he had received Terry's last letter commenting on the affair of Nicolai and the dishes. It had been a tired little letter, undated, that made no mention of him and herself but dwelt instead on the pity of such temper as Nicolai's.

He knows how to be so dear, she had written. I think and think about our year together and I realize, looking back, that of all the women he knows it is Clara he most respects. He has shown his finest side to Clara and his worst to me, and I wonder if it isn't my own fault.

Before ever I met him I heard from Mrs. Withington of his caustic tongue and bitterness, and I thought then that it was not the least wonder that he was so. I thought his mother must have been something like *Maslova* in *Resurrection,* a creature of fate, a victim of life, and how her son must have suffered for her. I felt then that I would like to know him if only to show him how understanding I could be. I wonder if I have ever fulfilled that dream. And have I ever tried, as Clara has, to command his respect? For Nicolai does respect quality of character. Even though I may have been generous with him (and you assure me that I have been that) I believe he feels my fundamental lack of that something which Clara has and I have not. Clara is more than good. She is strong and brave. Had he threatened Clara as he did me, she would have looked him in the eye and turned and walked out of his life without a tear or a gasp of surprise. And so would Mabel. But I am beginning to see that he wouldn't have threatened them. He knows I am easily frightened and it provokes him to mischief.

Because to be generous is a more comfortable feeling than to be bitter and unforgiving, I want to be generous in my thought of Nicolai, for I am tired, Harry. Too tired to carry the extra burden of a grudge. He expected certain things of me and I not only failed to give them to him, but failed to make him believe in me. It isn't his fault. He loathes failure, he worships character that is like our paper money, all woven through, up and down and crosswise, with silk threads of strength.

I am trying to find what truth is, Harry. You told me once that Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" and that Jesus didn't answer. If He wouldn't tell, how can we know? Yet I mean to try to find out. I have come this far—that truth for me includes courage, because I need so much of it just now.

No. He must wait no longer for her to send for him. He immediately wrote a telegram to Miss Spencer saying that he meant to come to New York and would expect to find a message at her apartment giving him Terry's address.

For reply Miss Spencer telegraphed him not to come.

Her niece had decided that she could not see anyone yet. He would but waste his time and effort if he attempted to learn Terry's address from her.

The telegram arrived before Field started and he pondered it with anger. She had broken her promise. Immediately on the heels of writing about truth, she had decided not to keep her word. That was consistency! He sat down on his bed beside a suitcase, tightly packed and ready for strapping, and read the message over and over. What should he do? He had already told his mother that Mrs. Karanoff had sent for him. He had pretended the telegram had come to his office. He had told Clara and she would tell Karanoff. Well, he had to go, that was all. He intended to keep his promise whether she kept hers or not.

Terry's last few letters had shown a tendency toward the practical that matched his own mood, reflected it almost, and made him realize that he had done exactly right in expressing to her his doubts and fears for them both. She had not reproached him. She had too much sense for that. She had understood that he wanted her to choose between him and Nicolai with her eyes wide open. If in the end she chose for him it would be because she had weighed well the losses against the gains.

Two days later, which was Saturday, he found ample time in which to weigh quite different losses against possible gains. He had arrived in New York that morning to find Miss Spencer's apartment occupied only by a slant-eyed maid who seemed to be unable to say anything except, "I don't know nothing about M's Karanoff." She had learned it like a parrot and she seemed to be figuratively sticking her fingers in her ears while she said it in answer to every question he asked. He remembered to use bribery, he smiled and was persuasive, he "guessed" he would just come in and wait until Miss Spencer returned and advanced a step, but the door shut on his foot.

It was then that he was told one additional bit—that "Miss Spencer was out of town."

He hunted up Gus Samuels' office, but he too was out of town. He looked up a friend who had been a classmate in medical college, but he was spending the week-end out of town. He went to Bellevue Hospital and asked them to dig up a list of every high class sanitarium where obstetrical cases were taken. It must be on the Hudson and not very far from Broadway, he explained.

A busy clerk gave him a medical directory that was larger than the White Falls telephone book and told him he could hunt out those located on the Hudson. The staff doctor who might tell him was out of town for the week-end. But the list took the starch out of his energy; the day was very hot and he despaired.

When a telegram to his mother was answered by the news that no message had arrived for him since he left, he felt that he had come to the end of his resources.

The days dragged while he haunted the court of Miss Spencer's apartment and on Monday he was rewarded when he saw her, a thrilling vision because of her likeness to Terry, step out of a taxi. She had a small traveling case and was returning, he was certain, from a week-end at the sanitarium. Later he did not know why he had not guessed that already Rosalind was part of that attraction.

She gave him no greeting, only a look so calm that, but for the expression of recognition in her eyes, he would not have known she realized that he was standing before her and speaking to her.

The very slightest of gestures told him to come with her and they entered the elevator to ride in silence to her floor.

The slant-eyed maid opened the door; Miss Spencer murmured, "If you'll wait a few minutes . . ." and disappeared.

The maid took his hat and brought him a glass of cold water on a tray; then she too went out and for almost half an hour he studied the room that now was home to Terry.

His chief impression was of signed photographs. Not that there were too many, but they were of a conspicuous type; theatrical celebrities—men with long straight eyes under long straight brows, straight strong mouths and square jaws; women in whom nothing whatever was either straight or square but one exquisite melting curve after another. There were arched brows, oval faces, spherical eyes, he thought, amusing himself with synonyms, crescent mouths, spiral curls, conical arms and rounded bodies.

The room was large, coolly shaded, and seemed to be full of the spirit of lilacs. But for the photographs and the unusual coloring there was perhaps little departure from the conventional ideal in living room comfort, but to Field it was not expressive of Terry. He thought of The Towers and its frank splendor as a fit setting for her. This room was complex, with an air of knowing more than it told. For one thing it was a feminine room, perfumed, cushioned, and with the small tables and footstools that no man would have consented to have about, because they would most certainly do to him what they did to Field—get in his way and all but cause him to sprawl headlong. In fact he hadn't noticed one footstool till he did fall over it, nor a certain tabouret set with a book and a green bowl filled with purple pansies, till he grasped at it to save himself. He recovered his balance, cursed his nerves and retreated to the neighborhood of the grand piano which was more nearly his size.

On the piano, shining in the dim light of the shaded room, was a silver picture frame, and Field, observing that it was the setting of another curved beauty, idly carried it to a near-by window and bent that he might look at it. It was Terry—Terry looking out at him from eyes as

luminous as love, and though the portrait was done in soft grays, the warm richness of her lips seemed to be emphasized rather than dimmed by the treatment.

As he bent there studying the face that quite satisfactorily did not change expression under his gaze, Miss Spencer entered the room, but her caller was not aware of her presence until she crossed the soft rug with noiseless motion and spoke to him.

"I am glad to see that you have something that interests you. I was afraid I was overtaxing your patience."

Field straightened slowly and met her eyes with a look that he tried to make as level as her own, but he was slightly disconcerted and her cool deliberation did not help him to collect his wits.

"Not at all. Not at all," he said, wishing he had thought of something more suave, and set the picture back on the piano.

"Even though it meant so long a wait for you," Miss Spencer said, "I had to change. The coolest street costume is too much on a day like this. . . . Won't you sit down?"

She indicated a chair and moved as if to seat herself but stopped, facing Field, and looked at him again, with smiling hostility.

He had regained his self-possession, and as he met her beautiful insolent eyes a flash of temper sent a dark flush to his cheeks. The vaguely amiable smile with which he had welcomed her melted from his face. He felt, suddenly, no need to smile at a woman who had mistreated him for almost four days.

There was no doubt but that she saw the evidence of his anger, for she sobered, seated herself in a chair so wide that there was room beside her round body for another such as she, and gave her attention to the frills at her wrists.

Field did not seat himself at once. He stood looking down on her with resentful eyes. She was using the fact

of her beauty as exception from courtesy, a petty fault common to the type and one he found so repelling that the absence of it in Terry had been her first charm for him. She had never seemed to depend on her exquisite face as the purchase price of liberties that brought discomfort to others.

By the time he had lowered himself into a straight-backed chair and folded his arms, Mabel's expression had changed to one he found more pleasing. The inverted V of her eyebrows gave evidence of concern for him, and she said, "I am sorry you chose to disregard my telegram, Dr. Field."

"Mrs. Karanoff had told me she would send for me when she needed me. I had promised from the first to be with her through her illness and I could not break my promise without knowing certainly that she did not want me."

"That was very loyal and beautiful of you," Mabel said as if that were the thing she knew he expected her to say. "But since you did not know her address you were dependent on me, and I did not send that telegram to . . . bid you on. I meant it."

"You meant it. Yes, but did Mrs. Karanoff mean it? Had she said positively that she did not want me to come?"

"I can't say as to that. We haven't discussed you at all. I only know that she said she would tell me when to send for you and that so far she has not mentioned you, nor a possible visit from you."

"Then you don't know that she doesn't want me?"

"Yes, I do know that she doesn't want you."

Field stared at her unblinkingly. He said, "You choose to speak in riddles."

"I have spoken very plainly."

"You are clairvoyant."

"Perhaps. At least I am very observant. I have known my niece all her life. She is not—a riddle."

"These definite statements you make, then, are the result of your readings of her simple mind?"

Mabel ran a slender finger along a tuck that crossed her lap and was silent.

"Will you tell me how she is? How she feels?"

"She has written you many letters. You must surely know that she is comfortable. She is given the most perfect care it is possible to imagine. The lines of weariness have not been permitted to mark her face. They are erased before they arrive."

"She wrote me that she was very tired. I was quite distressed about it."

"Certainly *you* ought to know, Dr. Field, that her weariness is mental."

She had stressed the you, and the deliberation of her words started a panic in Field's nerves. He nodded, however, as if they were agreed that Terry had more than enough to weary her mentally, and he said, "I believe I can help her, relieve her. I know her case so well. Her unhappiness has been revealed to me step by step as it came to her, and long before you and her mother took her in charge she was the center, the chief concern of my days. I have every right to a place in her life right now, and when I sent her to you to be hidden even from me, I did so for her own good, and because I believed that you would be as fair with me as I was with you. You simply are not playing fair."

He was talking well, expressing exactly the sense of injury he felt, but as Miss Spencer did not answer, he rose and paced a length across the windows. She watched him and he knew that he could sustain as much of her deliberate scrutiny as she chose to inflict. He had worn for this interview, his new white flannel trousers and blue coat. They were fresh from Fifth Avenue, chosen for Terry's observant eyes, and from collar to white buckskin oxfords he felt correct.

When Miss Spencer spoke, however, it was to repeat,

"Not playing fair," as if she found the idea absurd. Then she continued as calmly as if she were making an observation on the cut of his coat, "You are the sort who thinks that because you have taken privileges you should be granted rights."

He stopped, arrested, but she said no more.

"Have I taken privileges?" he inquired.

"Haven't you?"

He kept steady eyes on her face, but he was reaching for his cigarette case. "Miss Spencer," he said, still in that quiet tone that included patience and courtesy. "You will have to explain yourself if we are to continue."

"Why should you think I want to continue? You have come here against my express request. I have no taste for this talk. Whether we continue or not depends on whether you stay and insist, or not. You did me a very good turn when you sent Terry to me. I shall never send her back to you either to hide or for any other reason, but because you did me that good turn, I am willing to listen to anything you have to say."

"For me merely to talk without hope of simple answers from you is pointless. I would like to understand first of all why we seem to be in a state of war and why we can't try for arbitration. I have come a long journey that I might do my utmost for Terry, and you have not made me see why that is offensive to you."

"There is no use going back over that ground. I asked you not to come. I have told you Terry doesn't want you. It would seem to me that to insist on my reasons for making these statements is to call down upon yourself unpleasantness that I . . . I would really be glad to spare you."

"Perhaps I would rather not be spared." The words came on impulse and instantly he regretted them. He did want to be spared. He was cold with apprehension of the things she could say if she once began. But anger and curiosity, the lack of a control that would have taken

him from her presence with dignity, trapped him. He went on, goaded by self-pity. "You insinuated a moment ago that in sending Terry to you I failed somehow. She wanted to go to you. She could not bear to be where Nicolai might appear unannounced. For her protection I let her go without knowing her exact destination. Now, when I would do for her everything in my power, you imply that I am . . . am demanding privileges."

By the lifting of Mabel Spencer's chin Field knew that his curiosity was about to be satisfied.

"When you say that you sent Terry to us to hide and asked not to know her address because it was for her good that you should not know her whereabouts, you are indulging in heroics. Why don't you realize that it is no disgrace to admit that you are terribly afraid of Nicolai? If you were not you would be utterly foolhardy. You have been foolhardy in daring to touch his property. Nicolai could destroy you in any one of several ways and the law would be on his side."

Field was speechless. He had moved toward a table presumably to light a cigarette and to put the charred match into an ash tray. The answers that crowded to his lips were so numerous, so vehement, so hot with anger and cold with fear, that he could voice none of them. He filled his lungs with smoke and exhaled slowly while he stared in the direction of the windows, but he knew that Miss Spencer was looking at him. At last he said, "Do you realize that your talk is exceedingly . . ." he groped for a word, found it and said, "ambiguous?" "Will you tell me what it is you think you know?" and he turned a straight clear look upon her. For a shocked moment he thought she was going to applaud. A laugh flashed into her face and he saw the first glimmer of admiration she had granted him.

He would have scorned to think he might ever be subject to even a touch of hysteria, and he was horrified when he broke into a laugh himself. Tears or laughter

or profanity were equally expressive at that moment. He was in torment.

As quickly as the laugh had come, it left. He had turned again to the window because he could not bear that she should see his agitation. The cigarette was already but a glowing stump. He lighted another.

She began to say slowly, choosing her words with a niceness that matched her clear deliberate voice, "You know that I do not deal in ambiguities. You understand me perfectly, and you know that I understand you, through and through. If you had the courage to help yourself to that which was Nicolai's, why haven't you the courage to discuss it with me? You want to discuss it, but you insist that we keep up a fiction that is childish. If you are wise you will thank me for refusing to let you see my niece: you will return to White Falls and make it very, very clear to Nicolai that his wife refused absolutely to see you. Terry has never done anything so generous toward you, Dr. Field, as to give you the chance to say that to Nicolai."

Field's face was working as if he were forcibly holding back tears of mortification. He wanted to hate Miss Spencer, and he was not hating her. He was finding her kind, as a grown person is sometimes kind to a foolish child.

"Will you tell me," he said at last, "if Terry has made you her confidant? If she has I can discuss this with you. If she hasn't I must continue with the . . . fiction, as you call it."

"Terry hasn't told me and I have not told her that I know. I am never going to speak of this to Terry. She won't force it as you have. Now that we are done with pretense, I want to show you that the thing I desire for Terry is for your own best good."

She paused and he knew she was waiting for him to protest, but he made no sound. He had seated himself opposite her in a low chair and leaned forward, his hands

locked in a clasp so tense that he noticed his own whitened knuckles. He was hearing her, he was answering with passionate explanations, he was fighting back defeat, but admitting it all in silence.

"Do you know," she continued, and her tone had dropped subtly from the aloof to the confidential, "that Terry's mother is trying to reconcile her to Nicolai?"

"No." Then it was not only his letters that had influenced her to caution in the matter of breaking with Nicolai.

"Surely," said Miss Spencer, studying him as if for the first time he had revealed the unexpected, "you would do everything you could to prevent that. If I have divined the facts of your relationship, what might not Nicolai divine if you three were in the same city again?"

Their eyes met in understanding, and Field realized through a confusion of senses what Mabel was telling him, with all the silent power of her conviction, that he could not risk, he did not dare to make any move that would assist in Terry's return to White Falls. If he wanted to stay there, if he wanted success and honor and peace, he must help her—Mabel Spencer—to make Terry content with the stage.

Miss Spencer was looking these thoughts into his deepest consciousness, and as he received them he saw by her smile that she knew she had made him understand.

XVII

WHILE Mabel played for that which she believed to be Terry's good, and Field, tasting tears and the bitterness of defeat, felt that he had never wanted Terry more than now when he understood that she might really be lost to him, she lay still thinking of a talk she had had with Dr. Baer in the morning. He was talk-

ing in her sitting room with the nurse, who soon would take Rosalind out for a sun bath, and Dr. Baer would return to her bedside to speak again, she was certain, of the subject of their talk.

On the night Rosalind was born she had had a time of strange exaltation when she had seemed to be close to the very fountain head of truth. Almost, she had felt, she could touch the thin curtain that hung always between darkness and understanding. She had wanted to talk to Dr. Baer then, to tell him her story and perhaps with his help to see more clearly, so that that thin dividing curtain should be transparent to her eyes. Particularly, she had wanted to tell him about that night in October when Harry had walked into her room. She wanted to say, "Suppose it had been you," and hear his response, because anything he said would help her to read that complexity that she was beginning to know as Harry Field.

Ever since she had come to the sanitarium she had been comparing him with Harry. They seemed to her to be the same type, grave, kindly, charming, with flashes of humor and immense capacity for unhappiness, and yet, with a subtle difference that she could not weigh. Dr. Baer was stronger, perhaps, less easily defeated, and he was older than Harry.

Afterward she was profoundly thankful that her impulse had passed before she had told him her shameful story, but the idea persisted until she had constructed a hypothetical case that would make it impossible to guess that it was of herself she talked while she would be giving him the essential facts exactly as they were.

Now Rosalind was a week old and she had told him the tale this very morning. It had seemed quite natural that she should explain the strange problem of a woman whom she said her friend, Clara MacRae, had nursed.

Dr. Baer listened, fascinated. She preluded the story with the statement that it was one of those truths that are stranger than fiction and more difficult to believe, and

he nodded, understandingly. He knew—"Tragedies, such as are the culmination of old forces that have been long at work in trouble making. Deeds," he said, "that seem to be but impulses, yet are the ripe fruit of secret desire."

Having won his sympathetic interest, she did not find it difficult to unfold the tale. She had never told it before, but she had longed to so persistently that now, when it took form in words, she was able to make it as vivid as a play. She painted her chief actors exactly as they were except in non-essential details, making a blonde of herself, a self-made American of Nicolai, a black-eyed Irishman of Harry. Their characters she delineated truly and she felt as she analyzed them for her intent listener that she herself had never understood them better. When she described Field's entrance into her room and repeated the words she had spoken as he stood staring at her, Dr. Baer interrupted without giving her time to continue.

"What did he do?" he demanded.

She caught herself up short and held her breath a moment. Then she said with the same earnest passion she had put into the recital, "What would you have done, Dr. Baer?"

He started, surprised by having the light turned on himself. "I?" he cried, pointing to himself. "Good heavens, don't ask me that. I know what I ought to have done."

"What?"

"Why, take her pulse, of course, and say, 'Here, woman, you're sick.' Is that what he did? Go on with the story."

"You know what he did." Terry sank suddenly, relaxed from the tension she had held through the recital, and whispered huskily, "That is what makes the story a tragedy."

Dr. Baer leaned back, his eyes fixed on the opposite wall. When he said, "They became lovers, of course,"

she asked quickly, "How do you know? Why don't you suppose, rather, that they hated each other?"

"Of course they became lovers. They were infatuated already. Otherwise he would have known that she was temporarily insane."

"Insane?"

"Certainly. We all have mad moments. She thought she loved her husband better than her own soul. She thought the young chap was but the means to an end, but really it was one of those swift selective passions that are as instinctive as the mating of birds and would be as beautiful if they didn't complicate things so terribly. They are both weak—very human but very weak. He entered the room as a professional man—or he should have. I think a psychologist would tell you that he also had had the very same thought she expressed. It wasn't a new idea to him. You see?"

"I believe—I do."

"If his mind had been concerned with her as a case, her suggestion would have revolted him. When he saw what was in her mind it exactly fulfilled his own desire. Tell me his name. I'll have the scoundrel bounced from membership in the American Medical Association!"

He had called Harry a scoundrel—that sensitive-conscienced, idealistic Harry Field! She had been the hard one, the one who through long months had kept an immunity even to regret. Until Harry had touched her conscience she had not admitted, had not known that she ought to feel remorse. It wasn't fair to call him scoundrel and let her off with a little psychological analysis. Her sense of justice was keen. She had always resented the elimination of the guilty woman from triangular affairs. Men seemed to think the settlement of the difficulty was between them, but from her point of view that was wrong. She had felt justified in taking the first step and the responsibility was hers. She thanked nobody for

absolving her. If Harry was a scoundrel so was she. Their difference lay in the fact that she was learning, while he was adding fresh matter for remorse to the sum total of his failure. He was failing Rosalind, and the day would come when he would pay as dearly as already she had. For she had now, ever before her soul's eyes, the contrast between her suffering of last fall when she had felt that if Nicolai's threat were carried out it would crucify her because she had loved him with such blind, terrible passion, and her suffering now wherein such "crucifixion" was but a growing pain compared to the agony of remorse that was going to haunt her to the end of her days. She closed her eyes and laid her hands over them; lay still as a stone while she whipped herself with Dr. Baer's judgment of Harry which she chose to share.

Until she heard Dr. Baer walk briskly into her room and his words—"I have been having some further thoughts about your black-eyed Irishman," she did not stir. Then, alert at once to the need for pretense that her story concerned folk whom she did not even know, she said, lightly. "I don't suppose he is really Irish."

"No. Probably not. No more than I am German."

She nodded pensively as if the subject didn't interest her especially, and he drew up a chair, fixed his eyes on her and began gravely.

"I think I know that chap through and through. I put myself in his place with the result that I have not the slightest doubt but that before he entered that room, and as he entered it, he was knowing that he could solve her problem in but one way, and he wanted to solve her problem in that way, because he loved her and loved her desperately, suddenly, blindly. Then—when she gave him the clew to her thought, she but played up to his wish."

"Then you don't think him a scoundrel after all?"

"Certainly I do! More than ever! A doctor's patient is a sacred trust exactly as property is a trust in a lawyer's care. The lawyer who does not regard it so is a

shyster and an outlaw; the doctor who behaves as your Irishman did is a scoundrel."

"Then so is she . . ."

"No. It is not the same."

Terry wanted to rub salt into her own wounds. "Then she is worse," she flashed back. "He would never have suggested such a thing, never lifted his finger, if she hadn't made the first move. Are we to be blamed for our thoughts?"

"Most certainly we are. As a man thinketh so is he, and my very point is that he had no business carrying that attitude of mind toward a patient. She had gone to him in deep distress and he should have protected her from just such madness." He was vehement, he thumped his palm with his fist then to relieve his own tension, threw out his hands in a gesture of futility. "I condemn him, you see. You condemn her. But nature punished her . . ."

"A lovely child isn't punishment," she interrupted quickly, and he raised his eyebrows.

"You ought to know."

"She has that compensation. He has nothing but remorse. I pity him. If she is worth anything at all she will want to learn to be better. She will grow and change and be an entirely different woman. You think so, don't you, Dr. Baer?"

"Different? I doubt it. She's weak probably. She may have the fundamental qualities. If she has character she only needs this one terrible experience to teach her. If she is a naughty little wanton all the thinking and regret in the world won't change her."

His tone was conclusive. He had done with the subject and Terry dared not show keener interest than his own. Again he had startled her by his insight. What guided him? How did he know these things of right and wrong so surely? How was she to search out truth that would save her another time from a terrible mistake? Was it because she lacked fundamental qualities of strength?

Was she what he called a naughty little wanton, one of those wretched thistledown women who blundered and wept and said never again, only to blunder in a different way another time?

After he left her she lay brooding. The despondency of weariness possessed her. She would never admit that she was too weak to grow into fullness of understanding. For Rosalind's sake she would find the light and walk in it. That Rosalind . . . The saving memory of her came as solace. They told her she was as perfect, as healthy a baby as ever the world had seen. Perhaps her little heart, that ticked like a tiny watch, was a very century clock wound up for long, long years of brave music. She would need a wise mother, and she was going to have a wise mother. That Terry promised her.

XVIII

ON the first day of August Terry returned to Mabel's apartment feeling as if she had been put through some strange sort of machine for remodeling, like a panama hat that has been scrubbed with acid and reblocked. And her simile was expressive of her appearance for both physically and spiritually the acid of experience had renovated her. There was tenderer depth in the clear blue of her eyes. Patience had touched her lips, while thoughtfulness seemed to illumine her from within, a light behind the transparency of her skin.

She began at once to work at her dancing, short sessions of exercise to the music of Mabel's reproducing piano that gave her moments of sheer happiness when she lost her trouble in her love of rhythmic movement.

She remembered the last time she had danced with abandon—that night with Sam while Harry Field looked on. She had been reckless that night; now, not reckless-

ness but the need for courage gave her the thrilling impetus she needed. When she closed her eyes, listening to the invisible hands on the keyboard that swept, with poetic perfection of sound, it was like the very spirit of wind, like the exultation of leaping waves, the dark murmur of the forests. She was lifted and sensitized till her body ceased almost to be flesh and became but the visible expression of her senses. And there came to her in those moments, the full appreciation of achievement that alone was enough to raise her from the very dead. The one who had composed, the one who interpreted and passed on to the sound-hungry world, such rapture of tone seemed to be singing to her, telling her that sorrow was beautiful, pain a joy, that the soul's travail was its ecstasy. The waltz from *Naila*, the *Chanson Bohème*, the Moskowski *Étude* made her very bones melt and her muscles to sing in response.

Bessie watched her anxiously, constantly warning her not to overdo. And one day when Terry cried, "Mother, don't I thrill you so you want to laugh or clap or something?" Bessie replied, "No, you don't, dear. Gus says you're noticeably stiff. Don't you feel it?"

Terry sank into a chair. "No! No! I feel as if I had been released from a straight jacket, from a cocoon. Just being free is so beautiful."

Bessie looked at her relaxed, glowing in a deep chair. "When you sit like that you don't look as if you had a bone in your body," she said.

Terry's exuberance had changed to indignation. She was thinking of Gus's criticism. "That's the misery of dancing professionally. That's the reason I never, never shall dance for money again! I felt just now as if I were more limber than ever before. My feet didn't seem to touch the floor at all, and I was happy and free and singing. But Gus says I'm stiff! If I had real genius for dancing, I would know by divine instinct that I look stiff. My dancing is emotional, I'm not an artist. I make this

vow to you, Mother. I'm never going to dance for a living. Nobody who loves the work he does should sell it. If I could write a book or paint a picture and I felt it, oh highly, passionately, like that music, I would never sell it and let the world look it over. I cannot bear to think of Sophistication raising an opera glass and saying, 'Ahhh . . . So this is Terry's heart? Or perhaps her soul . . . Rather drabby color, isn't it? Or am I mistaken? Perhaps she but lacks courage to express herself in her *true* colors.' "

"Nonsense, Terry." Mabel came into the room. "You certainly would lack courage. People whose opinions are worth having don't expect to find the soul of the artist in the product. When you dance as a bacchante you are not Terry Karanoff on a spree, but an artist interpreting the spirit of revelry."

"I never expected to hear you say such a thing," Terry replied. "The difference between my dancing of any bacchanale and Pavlowa's dancing of the same thing is exactly a matter of soul, of personality."

"No, it is a matter of interpretation and technique. Brains and hard work. Because a man writes beautifully or paints beautifully is no sign his soul is beautiful—not the least."

"How do you know?" Terry demanded.

"Because I know the souls of some of them—that they are black as sin itself, even though their work is lovely beyond praise."

"If their work is lovely beyond praise it proves that you don't know their souls, any such thing, even though you think you do. How else are we to know, and to be known, but by our work?"

"Our behavior speaks for our souls; our minds and talents for our work," Mabel insisted, and Bessie immediately seized the opportunity to say, "Terry, that reminds me. Your behavior to Nicolai speaks very poorly for your soul. How many times must I remind you that

you must set a date for his visit. You are perfectly able to see him."

As a bird flies from its nest the animation flew from Terry's face. She sat with closed eyes while Mabel, who had ignored Bessie's interruption, enlarged upon her own idea, but when Mabel had finished she rose and moved to the writing table.

"I began a letter yesterday, but the thought of standing here—alone—in this room and seeing Nicolai come toward me . . . I couldn't finish the letter . . ." She dropped down on the writing chair, her knees crossed, her scant dancing dress clinging to her soft body, and pressed her head hard between both hands. She must write, not only to Nicolai telling him she would see him, but to Field asking him earnestly not to come. He would know that Nicolai had come and he might decide in his impulsive way to arrive immediately upon Nicolai's return.

As she contemplated that possibility she knew that she was insincere with herself. He would not come; she need not suppose that he wanted to. He was behaving in his letters with patient but injured dignity, for when he had learned that Rosalind had arrived a week before his talk with Mabel he had been deeply hurt. He had written her in reproach, "You do not love me as I love you, Terry." And—"The more I think about it the more I realize that the stage is your refuge. I do not dare to persuade you to come to me here in White Falls. Even if you decide to divorce Nicolai and are free, you must not come here until he has entirely recovered from the loss. Ardently though I long for you, I am keenly aware of our peril. I love you too much, too dearly, to endanger you for the gratification of my own longing."

Perhaps he meant it. She could not be sure; she didn't want to judge him, but—the hands that held her aching head slid down over her eyes to press back tears; tears tightened in her throat. But he had loved her once. And that was the sting in the shame she had to bear. Like

Nicolai he had loved her and now—like Nicolai—he could desert her. Clearly, unmistakably, they showed her her own unworthiness. Somehow, perhaps because Harry was an American and young, because he was Rosalind's father, his gradual desertion of her was more cruel than Nicolai's.

XIX

AT dawn of the day she had named for Nicolai's call Terry waked shaking with a chill of apprehension. She had asked him to come any day after the ninth of August, and he had replied in a note so crisp and businesslike that it had been a shock to her, that he would arrive at two o'clock on the afternoon of the tenth. She had received that note with trembling eagerness, for she had felt that it would be significant of the temper he would bring to their interview, and its cold impersonal tone so repelled her that she had not noticed until some time after reading it, that he had used The Towers stationery. In her effort to anticipate him she had been picturing Nicolai at his office desk, dictating to the top of the head of a stenographer, but when she realized that he had used The Tower stationery she knew that Charlie, who wrote only confidential letters, had taken it in Nicolai's own study.

She turned the heavy double sheet over again and again in the hope that it would yield up some further clew as to his state of mind. Unless he had meant the letter to make reference to their estrangement there was no reason why he should not have dictated it in the office, yet he had sent her, from the privacy of his own room, a few lines as chilly as a legal document. He had asked Charlie to come out in the evening, evidently, had settled himself to dictate a studied letter, had interrupted himself a half dozen times to say, "No, not that! Kill that." Until in ex-

asperation at his own vacillations he had peremptorily snapped out the glacial lines that disquieted her.

Cold sweat stood in beads on her face as she lay in the dawn of that August tenth trying, as she had tried constantly since his note had come, to foresee Nicolai's behavior. If she could anticipate his attitude toward herself and Rosalind, she would be ready to meet him, but she could not guess what line he might take. If he had walked the floor of the study constructing sentences that later he ordered "killed" it meant that he felt the need of strategy and was anxious to make no false move. Perhaps he knew all her secret and was building up, stone upon stone, a carefully detailed plan to get Rosalind away from her.

As Nicolai understood the law it was a very treasure chest of cunning tools that he employed for his own purposes as neatly as a carpenter uses a chisel and a gimlet. Justice, right, mercy, were words that connoted ideas he accepted, but where his will was concerned, they were merely words, nothing more. If he knew a certain part of the truth about her, as she suspected Mabel knew it through intuitive perception and telepathy, he would believe that justice, right, and mercy were on the side of his claim to Rosalind.

He had not known of Rosalind's birth until she was two weeks old; and then only the facts of her birth date, weight, and name were given him, but he had made the receipt of that news an occasion. He had given the newspapers an interview, which included the announcement of his gift to the new hospital in his daughter's name and the next day had gracefully accepted the honor of having the proposed children's wing called for its donor, the Rosalind Karanoff Ward.

If he felt deep disappointment because the heir was not a son he did not let the newspaper men know it. He sent Terry a brief telegram and a bushel or more of flowers, but no letter. She watched for one with growing

trepidation, for his failure to write meant either that he was in a temper of disappointment or else that he knew the truth and was biding his time to deal with her. When a bundle of newspapers with their florid stories and spreading pictures of The Towers, of Nicolai mounted on Storm and herself on Melody, was forwarded by Charlie she studied every detail of the wrapper, of the telegram, of the card with the flowers, and learned nothing save that Nicolai was hiding behind a mask.

Out of the scrap of information she had given Nicolai and he had passed on, the papers made columns of news and Terry read with dilating eyes the reporter's accounts of the splendor that awaited the young "princess," the list of properties to which the tiny Rosalind was heir. The hospital, which she had begun with the coupons she clipped that October night, was to be a fact, with Nicolai at its financial center, Harry Field its medical head, and Rosalind's name upon it! Wheels within wheels, the human hodge-podge of tangled skeins. Human beings seemed to walk the earth as distinct one from the other as the individual trees in a grove, yet life was secretly interwoven with life as the roots of growing things are twisted and entangled in the darkness underground.

The enormity of the thing she had done grew upon her. So simple it had seemed to her last fall in her abysmal ignorance. Young in experience and logic she had thought she was going as straight as an arrow to its mark, when really she had traveled in a circle of mischief, spreading trouble in her wake like a plague. What and where the end would be was beyond the imagination. She could go on and on foreseeing possible complications until she was faint with the responsibility of it, but the first complication that concerned her was this of Nicolai's intentions. Anything was possible to Nicolai except the relinquishing of his claim to Rosalind. He was capable of making this public stir which showed him in very generous attitude, immediately before revealing the fact that

Field was her lover. He might intend to ruin her and Field both and yet so fight as to leave no doubt as to his paternal right to Rosalind. Again—she knew that he might decide that to have Rosalind without scandal was worth anything it cost him in pride. The desire for a child was a fundamental need in Nicolai, but it was more because it had to do with the perpetuation of his business. Time was so precious to him now that he might use his knowledge to buy her, knowing she would endure any fate rather than brand Rosalind, and threatening to punish her through Rosalind if she refused to accept his terms. Yes, anything was possible where Nicolai was concerned. She could never think her way through to a probability of what he might say to her this day. She could only tighten her determination to let him do the talking. By silence to keep free from any traps he might lay for her and, if she were cornered, to lie. Lie! She who was passionately hungry for truth and goodness, yet there was no choice for her. She would never, never fail Rosalind by admitting the facts. For Rosalind's sake she could look Nicolai straight in the eyes and deny the charge she feared.

Unable to lie inactive another moment, she rose swiftly from her bed and went into the living room where the rising sun sent its pale shafts through the haze of a dawn that was suggestive of autumn. She walked about, sick and trembling with fear, and at last, hearing Rosalind's cry, flew to the little nursery and bent above the baby who lay in her lace-trimmed basket, her tiny arms uplifted, her hands fluttering like rose leaves. As yet her cry had been but a coughing prelude to the appeal she knew well how to make, but as Terry leaned above her, crooning endearments, her voice softened to a murmur while her eyes widened in the dimness until they were like two spoonfuls of summer blue.

To look at Rosalind and not to smile was impossible and Terry gave her an April face as she talked and kissed, powdered and pinned. When Rosalind was wrapped in

a fresh flannel gown she carried her into the living room and sat in the sunrise to nurse her. For a while her tormenting thought had ceased and when in the quiet it rushed upon her again, she closed her eyes and prayed desperately for mercy. "God in heaven, if you love this baby let me keep her. Oh, God, I promise you I will be good. I will be true. Help me to be brave today . . . No room for fear. God . . . Don't let me think . . ."

She held Rosalind close against her; bent over her; cherished her until her lithe little body was a circle about her—the eternal circle of Eve mourning paradise lost, but holding paradise regained to her heart.

After a while the passion of prayer passed and she began to think again, but blessedly in another direction that led her away from fear. She reminded herself that she was on the path that would lead her to the truth. Truth to her meant understanding, sensitiveness to right and wrong, wisdom for Rosalind, and she could discern no truth, nor could she grow in understanding while fear clutched her with icy talons, for truth ought to come as a god in shining raiment. Her theatrically developed mind designed the blinding white of his costume, his flaming torch, his shining face. Truth as Gus saw him was a practical fellow, mean-visaged, ferret-eyed. She was done with the sort of thing Gus stood for, yet she was forever wrestling with the thought of him, for he was an artist who made selfishness and greed parade as virtues. Harry Field knew a stern but beautiful Being who eluded her. Harry worshipped him in abasement of spirit and carried in his vocabulary such hurting phrases as "save your own soul," "redeem yourself," "atonement." Words that to her meant agony of heart, yet though she had accepted her suffering in the hope that it would be salvation for her soul, she felt as lost, more lost, than ever. And now today Nicolai would come with a philosophy as European as his name, as cold as his letter, as mean-visaged as Gus's god. None of the three was right for

her and yet here at her breast was Rosalind, precious, tender, dependent, needing a mother who was all things beautiful and true.

Some mothers were naturally beautiful and true, it seemed, but she had lost faith in herself before ever there was a Rosalind. Now her conscience, like a bleeding wound in her heart, cried for guidance, that she in turn might guide.

At two o'clock Nicolai came. Terry had filled the agitated hours with preparations of her toilet and Rosalind's. She had prolonged their baths and dallied over choice of garments. She had planned that Bessie was to take Rosalind for her airing in the park immediately after Nicolai arrived, but Mabel was to stay at home ready to answer a call for help.

She was going to break with Nicolai before their interview was over. She tightened her courage and buckled her resolve to put herself beyond danger of his wrath, but greater than that was her need to go out to salvation through work; to freedom through hardship, to the long road that would lead to the hilltop of self-respect. In this last interview she must look her best that Nicolai might remember her, not as a sick girl shrinking from his advances, but as a healthy young woman of independence and character.

To assist in this impression she dressed her hair as Nicolai had always preferred it and, aware that his eye was sensitive to color, she put on a soft green dress that would harmonize with the lilac tones of Mabel's living room.

At two she was dressed and reciting *Helena's* lines to still her panic; at five minutes past two she was pulling her hair down about her shoulders for a complete redressing, and when she heard Mabel tell the hall clerk to send Mr. Karanoff up she was peeling off her dress.

Not to make Nicolai wait for her would be failure in technique, and to have to hurry a little in dressing would explain her breathlessness that no acting, no degree of control at her command, was going to hide from him.

When at last she turned her back on the mirror she knew she had been blind to her own reflection. She had not improved the dressing of her hair, for her hands had been clammy with cold, but Mabel, watching her silently, nodded as if she considered her presentable.

She went quickly into the hall, but stopped abruptly at sight of Nicolai's hat and stick lying mute and somehow terrible on the hall table. A glove thrust from beneath his hat was like his accusing finger leveled at her. At the living room door she paused again, holding for a moment with one hand to the portiere.

Nicolai was standing against the light in pale summer gray; he had her lines of *Helena's Husband* in his hand, but his quick eye caught her movement and he tossed the rumpled pages to the table as he turned to receive her.

The moment during which they advanced upon each other was like the long terrible moment before the crash of an accident. Nicolai's hand was out; it was he who received her rather than she him, and as his fingers closed warmly over her cold hand, he bent and would have kissed her. He had said, "Well, Terry, my dear . . ." in his fashionable voice—that rather throaty voice that Terry knew was an indication of his will to be amiable—and he showed no displeasure when she drew back so that his lips merely touched her hair.

Still keeping her hand in a close clasp, he said, "You are very white. Your hand is cold. I had expected to find you looking stronger."

She managed to smile, tremulously as she drew her hand from his, but she could not speak, and to postpone meeting his eyes more directly, she went to the window where she adjusted the shades slightly, deepening the shadows of the room. When she turned to him he was still re-

garding her as if he were willing on this occasion to take his cues from her.

"Won't you sit there?" she asked huskily, indicating the sofa with its lilac velvet cushions, and herself took the chair from which Mabel had watched Field's increasing torment. But Nicolai did not sit down. He moved toward her. "You'd better sit beside me on the sofa. I don't like to talk of personal matters across a room."

Drawn by his persuasive manner, Terry rose and went to one end of the sofa while Nicolai disposed himself in the center. She was saying, but with hardly enough breath for the words, "I hope we won't have to talk long. I should like to get done. As soon as possible."

"What have we to say, Terry?" He turned his eyes directly to hers and searched her face, and she sustained the look with pale courage. He, it seemed from the question, had decided to make her talk.

She was seeing clearly that in all their separation he had not changed. Save that she had forgotten how densely black were his heavy-lidded eyes, he was exactly the same, thick hair, tense chin and the look of arrogance that now was softened by a deference unusual in him.

"I have nothing to say," she answered steadily. "I wrote you my plan, but you refused to discuss it by letter."

"You have not changed?"

"No."

"I thought that when you were quite well you would feel differently. Are you quite well? Do you feel strong?"

"I am well."

"You are very white."

She looked down at her clasped hands. "I am white because I dread this talk."

"There is nothing to dread. I have come to take you and Rosalind home with me to The Towers where everything is ready for you. Where Lena and Carter and Emmanuel are eager to welcome you. The new automobile

I bought for you, the Hispano-Suiza, came just before I started, and there are other gifts that you will like even better."

He offered her gifts—toys—as if she were still that child-Terry he had pampered with playthings once long ago. Oh, she had grown! Thank God for this reminder of her old self against which to measure the new!

"I don't want your gifts, Nicolai." She smiled faintly, but she could hardly breathe and her lips felt cold, yet her fear had receded like a wave on the sand. He might at any moment change his tactics and reveal his knowledge and his intentions, but at least he was beginning gently and she was able already to reply to him with courage.

"You don't want my gifts?" he repeated mildly, as if he were not quite certain that she had said those words, and continued, "I want yours, Terry."

"You mean . . . ?" She had started to ask if he meant Rosalind, but it was for her to keep Rosalind out of their talk.

"I mean you—yourself—and Rosalind. I want you to come back home with me."

He had put her before Rosalind. She looked up, suspicious of trickery, but saw that his eyes were still intent on her and that his face expressed only concern and inquiry. "I thought," he went on, "that when you were well you would see all our differences honestly, and that you would want to come back."

"I do want to see honestly," she cried, instantly responsive to his continued gentleness. For the first time in a week her heart's drumming had quieted; she wanted to talk. "I want that more than anything in the world because I can't be happy until I find truth and honesty. Nicolai . . . everything . . . everything seems wrong with me. I fail and fail. All that I gain I lose, and worst of all I have lost faith in myself." She had put one of the lilac cushions on her lap and she leaned forward now across it, her hands clasped, her face on her tense out-

stretched arms. She wanted to go on, to pour out her heart to Nicolai, but her resolution to resist him, to tell him nothing, her dread of terrible tears that would be released if she talked, made her bite her lips, to hold back the words.

"Terry . . ." She felt him move and from his tone she thought he was going to touch her, to try by tenderness and kisses to break her reserve; and she knew that if he did she would strike him. If he would talk to her as one suffering human being to another she would listen and respond, but if he tried a baser method she would turn against him with all the contempt he deserved.

He put out his hand and would have laid it over hers, but drew it back. He was watching her.

"I am trying," he began slowly, "to understand. You have turned against me and yet you say that it is you, yourself, who have failed."

She lifted her head, and her dilated eyes flashed over his face.

"You have failed, too, Nicolai! Don't think I am not conscious of it, but it is with my own failure and my own desire for right that I am concerned."

"I see. Tell me, Terry, where I have failed you. Let me see this thing with your eyes."

It was not difficult to look steadily at him now. As he continued in his tone of consideration her self-confidence increased. She said sharply, "Do you need to be told where you have failed?"

"Yes, I want to be told. You see, Terry, if we don't talk this thing out now it will have to be done in court, for of course I shall never relinquish my hold on my own child. As long as I live I shall fight for her. You must not leave me to imagine wherein I have offended."

"Imagine is not the word. Nor will your right to Rosalind weigh in the American courts. Rosalind is mine. My own. She belongs to nobody but me. When you went away to travel with a mistress you gave Rosalind to me

and you have no further right to her unless I choose to give it to you. There's not a court in the United States that would give you any right to her. I can sue you, Nicolai, and collect as much money from you as I want. I can take my father's name again for myself and Rosalind, too. Do you know that?"

"Yes, I know it. But I know that you won't do it," he said quietly.

"Why won't I?"

Her eyes were brilliant, the color had rushed into her cheeks and lips; the very curls on her head were live question marks. Never before had she been so certain of her power as at that instant. The thought about her name was an inspiration of the moment and she liked the idea and held to it as she faced him.

"You won't for several reasons. First of all, you have a very real sense of justice and in your heart of hearts you know that if you did this thing your laws make possible, that it would be unjust to me, that you would punish me far more than I deserve. Nobody knows more certainly than I, Terry, how frequently injustice is done in any court. I know your laws. I know that you 'have me' in the palm of your hand, but if you are searching for truth and honesty you won't be able to take your advantage. You see, I have a faith in your goodness, even if you have not."

Terry said, "That is polite of you, but I know it is not my goodness that you count on. It is my weakness, my stupidity. Last fall you threatened me with divorce and I suffered and died a most terrible love death right before your eyes while you looked coldly on. I didn't cling to you then because of my 'goodness,' but because of my stupid, spineless . . . oh, I can't name it! But it is the thing that made you dare to threaten me; the thing that brings you here today sure that I won't take all from you the courts will give. When you left me even so late as March, I still loved you enough to suffer bitterly, but now

I am cured and you have cured me. The divorce you suggested last fall is yours for the taking."

"I don't want it. I didn't want it last fall."

"Then I am right. You threatened it because you knew how dreadfully I loved you, and because you wanted to hurt me. You knew I would bear it and tormenting me gave you pleasure."

Nicolai made an abrupt movement, as if he were feeling the futility of explanation. She saw the muscles of his face tighten and then relax. After a moment when the only sound was her own quickened breathing, he began to talk.

"Terry, all this that you have said proves that I have not misunderstood you. I supposed that you were thinking this way, but I wanted you to tell me so yourself. Will you give me time to answer you and explain these things as I see them?"

"Yes."

"Then to begin with I admit that my seven devils had possession of me last fall. There are times when any human being likes to hurt the one he loves. Your happiness and resignation simply got on my nerves and I did and said things I have regretted. That is an apology. Right after that I was angry too because you consulted young Field, and when I found that your judgment had been better than mine I . . . You know the way such things are likely to react. I didn't have much faith in Field as a man; I haven't now, but he is a good doctor, as we have reason to know, and you were right. Apologies don't come easily and a man hopes his wife understands. Now for the travel. I have a question to ask you. Answer me honestly."

He turned so that he looked straight into her face. "Why wouldn't you go to Europe with me?"

Terry's eyes and mouth opened with astonishment.

"You know why!"

"I have wondered. For some reason you wanted to

stay at home. I have remembered the night I first spoke of it. You didn't even consider the idea. Why?"

"Because I couldn't."

"No. There was something else. A young girl doesn't resist the idea of the most luxurious travel to relieve a time of boredom, without a better reason than the state of her health."

Terry was so astonished by the truth his question revealed that she was speechless. Nicolai did know her secret and he was going to tell her that she stayed because she wanted to be with Field. But she would never admit it . . .

He continued. "You took Field's word for the fact that you couldn't go and made no effort to persuade him. If you had wanted to go you would have tried to convince him."

"I felt that I couldn't, and you didn't really expect me to go."

"I did. I wanted you. Field was an old grandmother about you. You could have had a nurse as companion, your mother—anything. Either you didn't want to go or you failed to realize what you so often fail to realize, that anything money can pay for is yours. You needed at that time comfort, care, amusement and you could have had it. If while I went on to Moscow you had wanted to stay in the Alps you could have gone to a sanitarium where the air would have done you worlds of good. You left home after all for a sanitarium. Why not sooner?"

"Nothing but my revolt against you and the feeling that I couldn't stay in your house would have made me leave The Towers. I love it, but I couldn't be there for you to return to."

"We waive then the fact that you wouldn't go with me. Your feeling was one that only your sex understands. I still hold though that you could have traveled and been very happy indeed, and some day you will see it so yourself."

Terry was seeing it so at that exact moment. Nothing could have surprised her more. Nicolai was talking again. ". . . as to my companion." He paused. "If I cannot make you see with my eyes in that matter it is only because you are utterly American and I am not. According to your national code I committed a heinous sin against you. According to European standards it was not unusual. It was not premeditated. I made no effort to arrange such a thing. It happened, and meant nothing to me. Unless you make an issue of it, it will drop from my mind as easily as I forget the menus of the meals I eat. I understand that to you it seems I put someone else in your place. Nothing of the sort. Nobody ever takes the place of a man's wife, because she is more than flesh. That is what I want you to know, that you are dear to me, Terry, in a way . . . in a sense that I . . . cannot describe. When I think of you with Rosalind in your arms you are like nobody else in the world, like nothing this side of heaven that I can find words for. In my way, I love you, and more than when I married you." He added abruptly, "I can see that you do not want me to touch you. But will you give me your hand? For a moment?"

Terry's hands were clasped on the cushion and she kept them so until Nicolai reached for one and took it, held it close in both his own against his lips. He did not look at her, nor speak, and for a while Terry could not think at all. Her whole tense body and fighting spirit had relaxed. Tears burned behind her eyes, but for the moment she was motionless, content to let his words linger in her ears.

XX

WHEN finally she was able to rouse herself to concentrate on him she knew that she had had to struggle more against the quieting touch of his hands and lips than against her own weariness. It was impossible to doubt his sincerity. He did want her and particularly he wanted Rosalind, but he was in no way changed. He had learned that she had the power to retaliate; he had missed her and of course he had hated the gossip that was concerned with her absence from White Falls, but she was not to be fooled; he was the very same Nicolai of ugliness and arrogance, an exhibition of which he had given recently in the incident of the tablecloth.

She realized that she was seeing him in full play for the attainment of his own desire. He had won her easily before. Now he was having to fight for her. This was the aggressive, winning Nicolai. A man who had achieved all that Nicolai had, would, of course, know how to go after the thing he wanted and Nicolai had approached her in exactly the right way. He might still be holding in reserve the knowledge that would break her, but if so he was a better actor than she believed him to be. In his eyes, his tone, the very atmosphere that surrounded him and in the dear familiar current of his magnetism that was coursing warmly through her veins, there was nothing sinister. Her super-sensitive nerves had relaxed even more than her mind was willing that they should.

He was making it hard for her to hold her determination, but she would not be broken by a few tender words, by the pressure of his lips on her hand.

He wanted her to forgive him and return to White Falls and, with the opportunity lying before her to accept

or decline, she told herself vehemently that she would decline. This was a further test of herself. She had known that for Rosalind's sake she ought to love Harry, and she had failed, not only to care for him as she should, but in making him hold true to her; she had avowed her intention then, with passion of desire, to earn self-respect, and this was her day of decision. The old luxury, the beautiful treasures of The Towers, the dearness of it all were hers again at the price of conscience, but she would decline . . .

She remembered that he had said there were several reasons why she would not go into the courts and take the utmost from him, but he had named but one of those reasons. What were the others?

She stirred and he released her hand. She rose and he stood beside her looking down, quietly, on her still face. He said then, "I want to see the baby."

"She is out in the park."

"You planned to have her out?"

"Yes."

"Does she look at all like me?"

Terry hesitated, "No."

"She is very young. Their eyes are always blue at first, I believe."

In an almost colorless tone as if, since words were inadequate to the thought she would express there was no need for emphasis, she said slowly, her eyes lowered, "Hers are so blue that I don't think it possible that they could change. She is like . . . a rose, a pink rose. She is perfect and tiny. All that is best in me lives in her. Nicolai . . ." The tears had sprung from under her lids but she looked straight into his eyes. "It doesn't matter whether I understand you or not. Nothing matters to me now but to be true to the ideal I have for Rosalind. I have felt that if I had been a better sort myself—of a different quality—that you never would have threatened me; nor have left me; nor have been untrue to me. You love

me, perhaps, but you don't admire me. Something brave and true is lacking in me, and you feel it. It calls out your seven devils. You said so yourself. I want my own self-respect. I want to make myself fit so to guide Rosalind that no man, no man at all, can ever do to her what you have done to me. I can't close the door on this last year and return to you and your luxuries and be the strong, true woman that I want to be for Rosalind.

"You are right in saying that I won't use the law to hurt you, but it's because I don't want to do anything more that would mar the memory of the happiness we had . . . I can earn my living and Rosalind's. I . . . I have got to find my own soul and . . . and redeem it. One thing I can give you. This—to remember—that Rosalind is the most beautiful, the living expression of the love I had for you." Her tears were falling so that her phrases came brokenly, but she lifted her face uncaring of the quivering distortion that ran over her features. "Nicolai, I loved you . . . I loved you so terribly that Rosalind . . . Rosalind is my soul . . . I sold myself to give her to you . . . because I loved you."

She had told him the truth and she was not afraid. She felt strength pour into her that was the very spirit of that courage she had most desired and she waited for Nicolai's response without so much as a tremor of apprehension.

He had caught his lip between his teeth; the nerves in his cheeks were twitching. She was looking at him steadily, but because her own eyes were drowned in tears she could not see his expression distinctly. But when he put his arms about her, she knew that she had expected it. He had found his handkerchief and he was wiping her face; he was saying, "My darling. Terry!" over and over. He bent his head to hers and she felt his lips against her hair.

"You sold yourself!" he repeated slowly, as if the words were pitiful, "to *me!* 'You must redeem your own soul!'

My darling child, what fanaticism is this? You can't cure yourself of being yourself by wearing a haircloth shirt. Did you think you could?"

"Yes."

"Well . . . you can't . . ." Again he paused and she heard the stricture in his throat. He drew her close and kissed her lips—not in the old way—but as never before, with tenderness like tears, with emotion that his words could not express. He went on talking, urgently. "You have been listening to such fellows as Field with their hundred percent American idealism; to Clara, who is so righteous she isn't lovable. You have been ill mentally as well as physically until you have lost yourself in a maze. And now in trying to be honest you are over-reaching yourself. Success and happiness for you lie with me, for you have already been successful in your marriage. Regardless of your regret that you love luxury, you do love it, and you hate the stage. You can't redeem yourself, as you call it, through a line of work you don't like. You talk of saving your own soul, yet in the process you would be so selfish as to drag Rosalind through back-stage life, boarding houses, one-night stands—all the horrors of your childhood that you have escaped. You married me to escape them and for marrying me you have paid a price, haven't you? You seem to think you have." There was a sorry smile in his voice.

"Yes."

He held her away from him that he might look, inquiringly, into her face, and she took the opportunity to draw herself from his clasp. She went to a chair and sank down, her head resting with the weariness of exhaustion on her hand. He followed. He was stirred to passionate argument that he thought would save her from her self-torture. She was looking for truth and he thought he knew what truth was. He, like Gus and Harry, was going to offer her his philosophy of life that would be a touchstone to all things beautiful and right. His selfish

philosophy that she had lived with for more than a year!

He drew another chair up close to hers and sat on the edge while he leaned toward her. He could not keep his hands off her, and as he talked, he put his fingers persuasively beneath her chin as if to lift it, but moved them to her cheek, where he brushed a tear away; and finally he took her free hand and held it close while for every word he emphasized he gave it a little squeeze.

"To start your search for truth by sacrificing Rosalind isn't a very good beginning in honesty. The fact is that nobody knows what truth is, Terry. Nobody knows exactly what a lie is. The best definition I can find of a lie is that it is facts withheld from one who has a right to know them."

Terry lifted her head. "Say that again!"

He repeated it, watching her alert eyes. She thought a moment, and he continued, for he had so much to say that he could hardly hold the pause.

"And that definition of a lie doesn't make it clear how we are to determine who has, and who has not, the right to the facts. That is for each of us to decide as the occasions present themselves. And to be as certain as possible that we are to decide right we must be honest with ourselves. You idealistic Americans talk so nobly about honesty as a godlike virtue. I am honest because honesty is the best policy, and so are you though you don't admit it as I do. That's what life comes down to, Terry, in hard fact. Good judgment. Do for yourself that which, as you see it, is the best policy, and that's the truest kind of honesty. Look at our clever young doctor. He has the high ideal about money; he is a bit above the man whose fight is all for money, and yet is he a degree less keen for money than I am? I haven't found him so, have you?"

"No."

"He's self-deceived. You are self-deceived. Honesty must begin deeper than you have gone. Really you don't

care a hang for your soul's salvation, because, first of all, you aren't sure you have a soul, and second of all, with your soul saved you would cease to be yourself. Have the courage to be yourself, Terry, and you will be honest. What is it you want?" He paused, but answered his own question. "I know. You want the best there is for Rosalind. Isn't that true? Well, then help yourself to it. It's yours for the taking. You won't drag her through a struggle for success in a profession you don't like, because that would be dishonest. It isn't what you want for her."

He gave her hand a last close pressure, then rose. "You are very tired, I can see. You need to go home to White Falls and rest from this struggle, but I won't urge you now if you'd rather not. Would you like to have me leave you now—let you rest?" He drew his chair back as he moved away from her. He didn't expect an answer to his question. This he deemed the right moment to leave her to think things over.

She sat crumpled, spent, her heavy eyes lifted, and watched his quick decisive movements. He had taken a card from a leather case, and he was writing something on it. "I am at the Knickerbocker Club. That's my telephone number. I would like to have a message from you at any time, but I shall return here tonight. To see you."

He put the card on the table, his pencil into his pocket, looked sharply at her again and waited for some word from her, but her tongue refused to move. She could hardly believe he was going. She wanted to ask him to stay a little longer, but she could not say it. The word goodbye formed on her lips in obedience to his expectant look and he saw it, though no sound came.

She rose slowly and stood in her crushed green frock against the background of lilac in the afternoon glow of summer. Her hair was pushed back from her forehead; the pallor of weariness and the stain of tears were on her

face. She watched Nicolai as he walked quickly into the hall and she thought, with emotion so deep that it made no stir in her pulse, "If he comes back and takes me in his arms I shall lift my face for his kisses and return them. If he asks me to say that I love him, I will say it. If he asks me if I am willing to go home with him, I will say that I am. For it is the truth."

But he did not come back. She saw beyond the portiere the movement of one arm as he put on his gloves, saw him take up his hat and stick, then open the door. There was a moment of hesitation before he drew back the portiere and looked in. As his eyes swept over her she saw the old smile, faintly amused, faintly arrogant, but satisfied, flit over his face. She closed her eyes, but already he had turned away. The door clicked shut and still she stood, listening, believing he would return, until the faint whirr of the elevator told her he was gone.

She moved slowly to the sofa and sank face down among the lilac cushions too tired to feel amazement, too spent with emotion to weep. Phrases in Nicolai's voice that were unanswerable rang in her ears and she heard again his words and his convincing tone as he said, "Have the courage to be yourself, Terry, and you will be honest. You idealistic Americans talk so nobly about honesty as a godlike virtue. I am honest because honesty is the best policy, and so are you though you don't admit it as I do. That's what life comes down to, Terry, in hard fact. Good judgment. Do for yourself that which, as you see it, is the best policy and that's the truest kind of honesty."

It was the truth, and perhaps the beginning of wisdom. It was a touchstone for judgment of the three figures that for so long had walked in endless succession across her inner vision. Gus and Field and Nicolai. Gus, shriveled and dwarfed; Harry Field, heroic and self-deceived; Nicolai incapable of the heights, faulty, but—a man. His unfaithfulness she could never forgive nor would he forgive her if he knew. But he should never know. It was

Rosalind's right that the facts be withheld from him; he had said so himself.

Perhaps for a while she slept; perhaps she but sank into the sluggish inertia that follows stress, she did not know, but she was roused by her own sobbing that broke out fresh and terrible.

She knew Mabel came to her and bent over her in silent sympathy, but she went away again, and then there were sounds of Bessie's return and from a far humming distance the call of Rosalind's appealing cry. Rosalind! for whom she had need of a god to guide her.

Had all her seeking, all her suffering, led her no higher than the cold altar of best policy? Was best policy to be her way of light for Rosalind?

As she went toward the little nursery her heart was crying in shame and desolation. Shame for the magnitude of her own dishonesty; desolation for the failure of her will to pay. She had sought a cross to kiss, and she had been absolved from penance. Was it true that right for her lay simply in being herself?

As the question took shape the answer broke in light upon her. In herself were the wellsprings of love, and love should be her god—love for Nicolai that would not die, love for Rosalind, but greater even than these, love of truth that was her soul's desire.

She lifted the crying baby and put her face against the little body. The moist seeking mouth brushed her cheek, the plaintive cry softened to an expectant murmur. Shining tears brimmed Terry's eyes, but she felt the steady lifting of a heavy burden.

She smiled at Rosalind through a blinding mist, a smile that caught in the trailing meshes of a departing sob. "Rosalind," she whispered. "Rosalind, listen to your mother, because she wants to tell you that you're going home."

Fairlawn—July 22, 1926.